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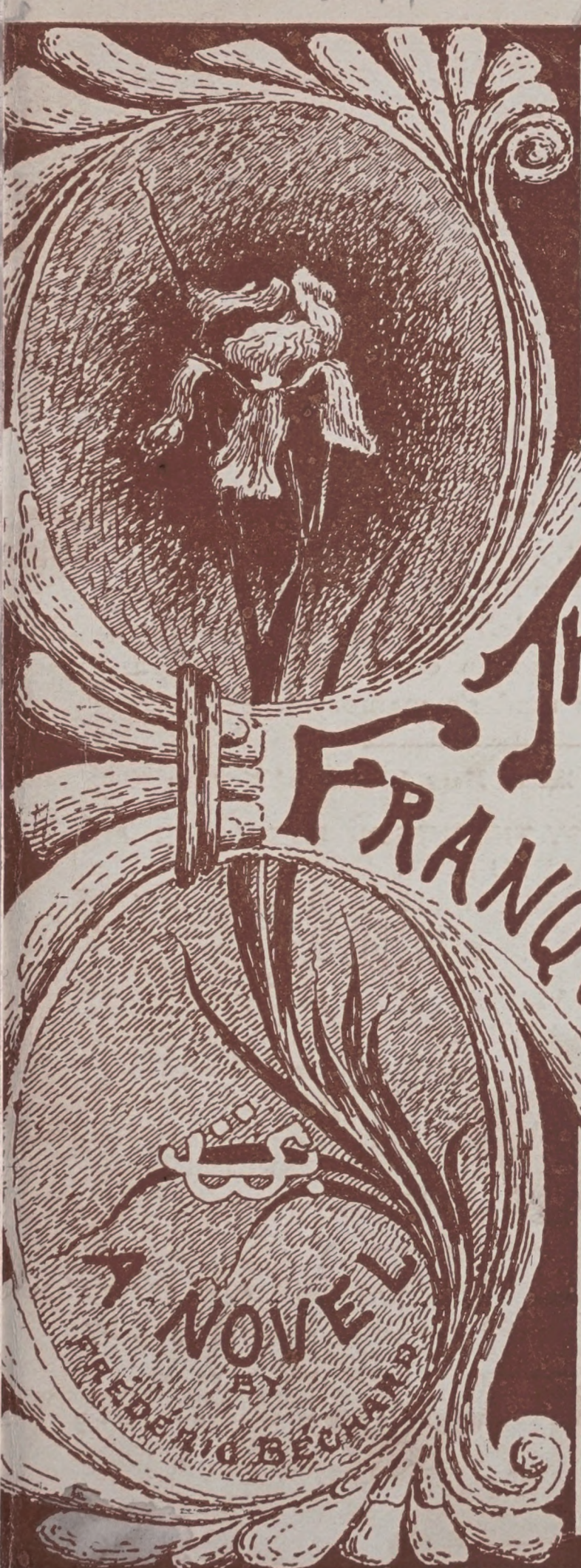

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THE MONK OF FRANQUEVAUX

A NOVEL BY FREDERIC BERNARD

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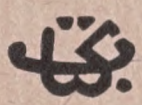

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PART FIRST.

THE MONK OF FRANQUEVAUX.

PART FIRST.

THE MONK OF FRANQUEVAUX.

I.

THANKS to the beautiful poem of *Mireio*, thanks above all to the railway from Marseilles to Lyons, which traverses the little desert of Crau, few persons at the present day are unacquainted with the existence of this second Arabia Petrea that Providence has placed near the marshy soil of the Camargue, and not far from the green mountains of Cevennes, as if to unite at a single point, in our admirable France, climates the most varied and soils the most diverse,—Egypt, Holland, and Switzerland. Meanwhile if Crau, with its sands and its pebbles, with its phenomena of mirage and oasis, has ceased to be a stranger to us, its neighbor, the island of Camargue, clasped as it is between the greater and lesser Rhône, and without any important road of communication, has remained nearly unknown. Hardly ever

has mention been made of its herds of wild horses, degenerate descendants of Arab coursers which have been abandoned by the Saracens, and its troops of black bulls, left to themselves in its great salt pastures. It is, however, a curious and picturesque country, this uninhabited Holland, from its very monotony,—a tract as vast as certain kingdoms, throughout which you will not find a single city, and everywhere intersected with canals and ditches of all descriptions. Some portions of it are green and luxuriant as a Norman field, others solitary and desolate as a heath of Brittany. In this unpeopled country, under an ardent sun which is reflected in its tranquil waters, and which at evening disappears through a golden mist behind the graceful ramparts of Aigues-Mortes, silence has so much majesty, solitude breathes a sadness so penetrating, that the most vulgar soul must yield to their inspiring influence. One day Chateaubriand came to visit this corner of the earth. At the end of a week he was yet under its charm. He neither wished nor was able to tear himself away from this strange island, so much the melancholy of nature here harmonized with the genius and melancholy in the soul of the great poet.

The soil of the Camargue is not much divided up, and contains but a very small number of inhabitants, and those are, for the most part, from Provence and the lower Languedoc, who are drawn to the island by the insufficient number of its laborers and the high prices given for work. Of the two or three scattered hamlets on this half-submerged land, the most important is situated at the mouth of the Rhone, outside of the Delta, and contains about five hundred inhabitants. It is the mysterious village of the Saintes, the Mecca of the Camargue, the holy object of an annual and popular pilgrimage; it is the shore where tradition locates the shipwreck of the three Marys of the New Testament, who were tossed about in their frail vessel by the tempest, and cast ashore near the spot where still stands the church consecrated to their memory.

Two or three periods during the year the cultivated part of silent Camargue is peopled with a noisy crowd. From the neighboring villages, at the time of the harvest and the weeding, an army of young girls hastens to pick out the parasite-plants and tie up the wheat sheaves. The charming costumes and the vivacity of these women, who resemble the northern peasant about as much as the gazelle does

the quiet sheep, their laughter, their songs and the sonorous brilliancy of their Provençal language, so beautifully accented in every mouth, so lovely on the lips of a pretty girl, animate the landscape, and in this country, where the remembrance of Greece and Rome is still so fresh, recall involuntarily to mind the idyls of Theocritus and Virgil.

As to the uncultivated and purely marshy part, it is only in summer that it presents any animation. The sun having dried the swamps, the reeds are changed to yellow. On all the roads for ten miles around which lead to the Camargue, you will encounter under the oblique fires of the setting sun, innumerable files of wagons, enveloped, like a convoy of camel-drivers in the desert, in a thick cloud of warm and suffocating dust. The discordant cries of the muleteers, who constantly call from one to another, mingle with the noise of the little bells, and the grinding of the heavy wheels upon the stones of the road is not loud enough to drown the piercing chirp of myriads of grasshoppers that blacken the neighboring almond-trees. Sometimes the wagoner questions the horizon with an anxious look. He examines whether from the side of the Saintes some black cloud does not mount to the heavens

and, advancing toward the north, threaten them with a storm. Arriving in the Camargue about daybreak, you may there see the crowd of laborers disperse through the marshes, already occupied by the mowers, and each team take in its load of reeds. Toward mid-day the same procession returns by the same route. Then men and beasts, the red or brown beards of the former, the black or white coats of the latter, all disappear under the gray uniform of the same dust, and the wagons high as houses, with a small white tent rising from the top, under which one of the wagoners usually dozes, find their way slowly and with an even balancing movement toward their homes abandoned since the previous night.

To the great delight of the engineers and road-masters, who each year see their roads broken up by these heavy convoys, to the great delight above all of the wagoners themselves and their mules, over-fatigued by night marches and by a labor without shelter under an overpowering sun, this rude work lasts less than a month. From the first rains of September, the water retakes possession of its domains, and man is driven away. As far as the eye can reach, a clear sheet of water covers the marshes

and sparkles in the sun. The Camargue again belongs to its sparse and pale population of fishermen and hunters of the water-fowl, and to its natural inhabitants—the swans and bustards, returning from the north, and the ibis and flamingoes which come back from Africa. The truth is, from its position on the borders of the Mediterranean, this region serves as a place of refuge or station for all birds which, driven from their native climate by the cold of winter or the too-ardent heat of summer, travel, isolated or in flocks, in search of a more genial sky.

Notwithstanding the incredible quantity of game which abounds under these rushes and in these ponds, hunting is too difficult for hunters ever to become numerous. The only months of the year in which the large migrations take place are October and March, and during these seasons a few persevering sons of St. Hubert come from Marseilles, Nîmes, and Montpellier, and take up their quarters in some solitary hut in the midst of these waters.

The reputation of the Camargue as a marsh-hunting country has even crossed the seas, and of late, more than once, amateur hunters have been seen

with their guns on their shoulders, coming from England, where they have left the Thames and the Clyde and their fox and grouse, to go flamingo-hunting on the banks of the Rhône.

II.

Last autumn, being obliged to make a prolonged sojourn at the South, I thought I would take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy the pleasure of such a hunt myself. Unfortunately, the premature rains which had inundated the island, rendered all sport for the time impossible in the heart of the Camargue. I therefore resolved to stop at the marshes and ponds situated on the right bank of the lesser Rhône, since the bad weather and damaged roads had put an end to my intended excursion to the borders of the Vaccarès.

At the very point where terminates the damp and marshy soil which extends as far as the canal of Beaucaire—on almost the last limits of terra firma, arose formerly the celebrated Abbey of Franquevaux. It was gracefully seated on the declivity of a beautiful hill, covered with secular forests on the northern slope, while from the south it appeared almost to float in the submerged plain. The revolution has demolished this learned monastery, dispersed its inhabitants, burned its books and its woods, and the hills, which

were formerly covered with majestic old oaks, are to-day left crowned with vines and grapes. Red partridge are found in abundance on these vine-planted hills, and from the bridge, which is in the form of a sugar-loaf and thrown over the canal of Beaucaire, you can, at certain hours, perceive in the distance whole flocks of wild geese and ducks, swallows, and sea-gulls, hovering in the last rays of the setting sun over the ponds of Vauvert and Scamandre. On the very ruins of the convent, covering a small space of ground which would bear well the comparison to a large farm-yard, are grouped five or six little houses, forming a hamlet and called Franquevaux, having inherited its name from the abbey. It was there I hired for a short time a little white-washed room facing the South.

On the very evening of my arrival, as I was starting out to reconnoitre, accompanied by the peasant in whose house I had my room, and who had been kind enough to serve me as a guide on this my first expedition, I observed a hunter walking in front of me, smoking his pipe, and preceded by a magnificent hunting dog. I had heard too much of the hunters of these parts and their Robinson-Crusoe

garb, not to be struck by the simple and decent dress of the one whom I had here before me.

"Is that a stranger?" I inquired of my host.

"No, sir," he replied, "we consider him one of our countrymen. He has lived a long time in Paris, but has taken up his residence with us during the last few years. He never leaves the hamlet, excepting an occasional Sunday, which he may pass at Saint-Gilles or Nîmes, or twice a year, perhaps, he goes to the fairs of Saint-Roch and Saint-Michel."

"What is his name?"

"His name is Maurice Vernier. But we only speak of him as the monk of Franquevaux."

"The monk?" I exclaimed with astonishment.

"Yes, we have given him this name because he lives in solitude, and shuns people of his own rank in life; because he shuts himself in, when the bad weather prevents him from hunting or fishing, to read during entire days the books that he procures from the neighboring town; and because he never refuses to assist poor people with his alms and his good counsels, like the old hermits of the past who sleep to-day under these rushes. Ah! if you could only manage," added my guide, "to make his acquaintance, and he would invite you to become his

hunting companion, you might consider yourself too happy. He is the most intrepid hunter in the country. Oh! heavens! how he brings them down, the poor little creatures."

We hastened our steps, and very soon found ourselves side by side with the mysterious hunter.

"Say, monk," cried my guide, suddenly accosting him in the familiar patois of the country, "here is a gentleman from Paris, whom I am out hunting with to-day, but as I have much work at home, would you be so kind as to take him in charge and pilot him?"

The hunter, casting his eyes on me without replying, examined me a moment with curiosity; then:

"I am perfectly willing," he answered briefly, in the same idiom.

"Good!" replied my host, addressing me; "you are a man who is not much to be pitied. The monk grants you a favor he does not bestow on everybody, and which the gentlemen from Nîmes and Montpellier, who come here sometimes snipe-hunting, would be furiously jealous of. You have nothing better to do now than to trust yourself entirely to him, and I swear to you that in changing your guide you have lost nothing."

I eagerly accepted the change, and, after the cus-

tomary courtesies, I started off with the monk of Franquevaux.

He was a man still hale, although he might have reached his fiftieth year, vigorous, active, of middling size, and of a constitution which seemed formed by nature for a hunter. The ease with which he carried his gun, and an enormous game bag crossed over his chest by two large leathern straps like a soldier's knapsack, his light but firm step, his sunburnt skin, all indicated a man broken to long and difficult tramps; at the same time his look, his delicate and slightly melancholy smile, as well as a distinguished air which marked his slightest movements, betrayed a person who has lived in cities and in the best world.

After walking a few moments:

"You are from Paris, sir?" he remarked with an accent which dissipated any doubts that might have lingered in my mind.

"Not precisely, but I live there."

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?"

I gave him in full my name and my profession.

"Ah! you are a writer?" he exclaimed with vivacity. "So much the better, because your profession must have necessarily brought you in relation

with many of my friends, my old friends," he added, with a sweet but sad smile.

"You have lived in Paris?" I inquired of him, puzzled as I was by this half confidence and in the hope of bringing about a more complete disclosure.

"I have."

"And who are the writers you have known there?"

"Bless me! nearly all," he replied, with the most natural smile in the world.

He then spoke without the least affectation, and without appearing to question the astonishment caused me by hearing such words on the lips of a hunter, accidentally met in the marshes of the Camargue, of Théophile Gautier, Arsène Houssaye, poor Gérard de Nerval, and of the painter, Camille Rogier, whom he had well known, and how they had lived together in the rue du Doyenné, these four friends, and given those delightful entertainments so beautifully described by Gérard.

"Alas!" added he, "the rue du Doyenné no longer exists; Gerard is dead; Camille has disappeared under an Eastern sun. As to the other two, I congratulate them with all my heart on their successes, and when it rains I read their works, and in

memory turn lovingly back to those who have written them."

He inquired particularly of Jules Janin, and in two or three words described the apartment that this dramatic king of critics formerly occupied on the garden of the Luxembourg, and in a manner that convinced me he had often had the honor of being admitted there. Then the conversation would dwell by turns on Victor Hugo, on Lamartine, on Alexandre Dumas, on Balzac, on Scribe, on all the brilliant authors of the present epoch, dating as far back as the revolution of February. My astonishment was transformed into stupefaction when I heard him comment upon the political men of the last reign, as familiarly as on its writers and poets. Without any doubt, he had known them, he had lived among them. This strange hunter, only preoccupied henceforth with eel-fishing and duck-hunting, had really passed the first part of his existence behind the curtain, which, upon the theatre of the world as well as on all others, separates the stage from the house and the actor from the public; he had penetrated into all the side scenes of the literary, dramatic, and political world.

While conversing we found ourselves on the bor-

der of the pond. My guide jumped lightly into a little boat which lay concealed in a small inlet, and made a sign for me to follow. From the moment I had taken my place by his side, with a quick push of his foot he started the boat very rapidly, and seizing the oar he steered the frail skiff through the rushes with an extraordinary skill. We very soon came to a little isle, where he moored his boat, and we directed our steps toward two shelters constructed of branches on the water's edge.

"Now," said he, when we were posted, "silence, and attention to the ducks! We will talk literature some other time." . . .

Night approached. Behind some clouds, white and flaky as a lamb's-fleece, and which a slight wind from the north had hurried toward the sea, appeared already in the east the reddish disk of the moon, which stood forth like a balloon of fire on the deep azure of the sky. Its first rays were reflected in the waters of the pond, and shed around us a sweet and caressing light, which recalled to my mind the pale glimmer shed by the winter sun through the morning mist upon the people of the north. With fixed eye, stretched neck, my ear on the watch, and my hand on my gun, I was mute

and immovable at my post during half an hour, in spite of quite a stinging cold, and commenced to despair, when all at once I heard over my head a rustling of wings which lasted for a second. It appeared as if a shadow with the rapidity of lightning had passed over me. At the same moment a shot was fired, and I recognized the dull sound which is caused by the fall of an inanimate body in the water, and through the splashing of the waves I very soon distinguished the hunting dog of my guide, taking possession of the prey to fetch to his master. Not a word had been exchanged between us. A few moments had scarcely passed when another report was heard. Within an hour seven shots had been fired and seven pieces of game brought down. How my companion was able to hit the birds as they passed like an arrow through the darkness, and which I could not even see, was a miracle my admiration was unable to account for, and can only be explained by that nervous sensibility, that extreme delicacy of hearing, and that unerring eye which the habit of hunting develops to such a marvellous degree amongst savages and poachers.

The darkness having become quite dense: "Halloo! friend," called my neighbor, "now for

home! Messieurs the ducks, and mesdames the geese have gone to bed now, and the hour has come when we will catch more rheumatism than game. Let us be off."

I rejoined him and he took me back as rapidly as he had come, while I lavished exclamations upon the remarkable feat I had just witnessed.

"I sincerely hope, sir," he remarked as we returned on foot to Franquevaux, "that our acquaintance will not end here. If there is nothing to prevent, will you have the kindness this evening to share my frugal supper? It is not, believe me, an idle politeness that I offer; it is a favor I request of you. The few words we have exchanged have aroused within me a thousand remembrances. I would like to recall, during an hour or two this evening, my past life, and I will be very thankful to you if you will aid me in conjuring up, through the smoke of our pipes and in a cosy chat at the fireside, all those charming and sad phantoms."

I accepted the invitation without much urging, and after having gone to the house and changed my damp clothing, I directed my steps toward his home.

III.

The monk of Franquevaux occupied a small house, or rather a kind of structure contrived between two arches, last remains of the old abbey, and built with the stones taken from the ruins of the monastery. The four principal walls of this hermitage were evidently the original old constructions which had escaped the hammer of the revolution. The entrance door, narrow and low, opened on a corridor, at the end of which was a modest stone staircase leading to the apartments. To the right of this corridor was the spacious and airy kitchen, shining with its bright tinned casseroles, copper kettles and table china, and the range placed under an immense chimney mantel. When I entered, the long spit was turning before a sparkling fire and exhibited one of those succulent and golden roasts, unknown of late in Paris, where the roasters and the patent oven, under pretext of progress, have replaced the spit, condemning our epicures to roasted meats, as insipid and flabby as boiled beef. The dog which accompanied us on

the hunt was seated on his hind legs near the fire, warming his nose and drying his hair. A beautiful girl of twenty years, in Provençal costume, superintended the preparations for dinner. Her nicely drawn-up stocking, which was visible from under her short skirt, suggested a well-formed leg, her close-fitting corsage of a shade deeper than her skirt brought out a perfect form, and a light handkerchief of red foulard, slightly opened at the neck, permitted a glimpse of its whiteness and healthy outline. Her raven hair, escaping in two evenly-divided bandeaux from under her Arlesian turban, crowned her pale face, which was of an exquisite outline, while her winning and sweet eyes were like those of a young girl in her first dream of love. As for me, whom the sight of certain cooks would disgust with the finest dishes, this lovely interior simply charmed me. After some moments of contemplation, in which I must admit there was nothing platonic, and following the direction of the girl, of whom I inquired where I might find her master, I ascended the staircase, and opening the first door I saw, I found myself in the dining-room.

Imagine a large square room hung with old tapestries representing a variety of hunting scenes, and

furnished with large and commodious leather chairs and an enormous carved oak table in the centre—an exquisite piece of furniture, on which the artists of the sixteenth century seemed to have exhausted their marvellous genius; imagine further one of those huge chimneys of olden times under which an entire family could gather at evening around the fire to listen to some pious legend of the grandfather or some fairy tale of the grandmother; and, lastly, imagine an oaken buffet, carved like the table and the chimney-piece, and covered with porcelain of various shapes, pretty china articles of all dimensions, plates and vases of different colors, and you will have but an imperfect idea of the astonishment I experienced on finding such richness and comfort where I expected only to see the plain, coarse furniture of a simple villager. To crown all, an ancient clock placed on a pedestal of most exquisite workmanship so enthusiastically excited my admiration, that the master of the house, noticing my presence, came in to welcome me, and took me to the next room, which was the one he usually occupied.

It was a small library or study room, filled with books and hung with pipes of all descriptions, from the ordinary clay pipe to the Cummer. The seats,

extremely simple in their form, were that kind of immense arm-chairs which at the present day are no longer made, with high backs, low, wide bodies, and projections on each side of the back to support the head and arms. A thick carpet more comfortable than expensive, which came from the factories of Nîmes, covered the floor. In a corner a round closet inclosed five or six fire-arms bronzed by smoke, the common appearance of which might have elicited a smile of pity from a Parisian hunter. But for me, what I had just witnessed was another proof that, with guns as with hunters, the most elegant are not always the most terrible. Near the chimney, lying her full length, was a beautiful hunting dog, spotted white and red, with her nose delicately resting on her outstretched paws, and her eyes lazily closed.

"You know Barbot," said my host, showing her to me, "my dog of the marshes; this is Fauvette, which I use on the plain. One of these days, if agreeable to you, we will go and hunt among the vines near Valcombe, and there you will see her work. She is the only one in the country that hunts the red partridge as neatly as she does the quail. The poachers of Saint-Gilles pretend that she has the evil eye, and that she fascinates our shy partridges, so easily these

swift-winged creatures allow themselves to be killed under her nose.

My host, according to custom, insisted upon showing me, even to the smallest details, all the comforts of his little home. We entered his bed-room. An immense bed, one of those old canopied beds, resembling a battle-field, in which our fathers slept at the time when the father of Malthus himself slept by the side of his wife, half disappeared under thick curtains of serge. The draperies of the windows and the portières were of the same material, and harmonized with the sombre paper which concealed the walls. Two pictures, slightly darkened by time, but in which it was easy to recognize the hand of some unknown master, adorned a chimney as severe as the rest. A massive ebony bureau, ornamented with brass carvings and surmounted by an antique mirror with bevelled edges, stood facing the bed. Throughout the room were scattered two or three easy chairs furnished with cushions, which were formerly called bergères, a sofa of an ancient model, and two modern chauffeuses. I do not speak of the carpet, as it was nothing remarkable and evidently had no other object than the simplest comfort. Nevertheless, in all the furniture it was impossible

not to observe that the monk of Franquevaux had done everything in his power to render inactivity easy and repose sweet, without any aim at either luxury or vanity, and above all without sacrificing anything to the exactions of fashion. In looking upon the contrast between this house where everything was so snug, so impregnated with the perfumes of well-being, and so thoroughly disposed for the charm of inaction, the comforts of sleep and the delicacies of life, and the man who inhabited it, persevering hunter, inured to fatigue, and perpetually on tramps over the rocky hill-sides or through the reeds of the marshes, it was impossible not to feel charmed in spite of one's self by an indescribable impression of intimate and sweet contentment. After a long day's hunt in the hot sun, or after a rainy evening's watch, how delightful must be the return to this hospitable dwelling! What voluptuousness in this repose and this silence suddenly succeeding so much fatigue and noisy activity! And what a thorough knowledge of the spiritual and material being was displayed in the intelligent arrangement of this hunter's home, the home of the monk of Franquevaux!

A little door contrived in the wall, behind the bed-

curtains, opened on a room which served at the same time as a toilet and bath-room, and which contained those thousand little necessary nothings useful for this double purpose. Two other rooms, also furnished in a comfortable manner, but extremely simple, completed the habitation of my host. One of these was his own, or, if you like it better, his bachelor's apartment; the other, which is ordinarily called the spare room, did not bear that name, but was called the room of the unknown. The monk of Franquevaux had no friends. It was there he received the few travellers delayed by the bad weather, or the hunting companions he always tried to avoid, but whom an inevitable meeting or accident obliged him sometimes to receive.

"This," he said, when we had seen everything, "this is my palace. It is small, but I am happy here. In winter I calk up the cracks against the furious winds which too often desolate these latitudes. In summer the arrangement of the windows allows me to establish a natural ventilation which keeps in the apartment an atmosphere always supportable in spite of the overpowering heat which sometimes sweeps over this country like molten lead. I only receive

a few peasants, and they like much better to stop in the kitchen."

On retiring I threw a last look at the room, the delicate arrangement of which had struck me, and I inwardly wondered if another shared it with him, when a door opened—

"My wife," said my host.

I remained dazzled, stupefied.

England and Germany fascinate the traveller by the great number of beautiful and aristocratic faces he meets there. In Spain, Italy, Provence, that French Italy, he is repulsed by the stupidity and vulgarity of the greater portion of the women. Still the artists of the North are far from having attained the same brilliancy in the creation of their feminine types as the painters of the South. What woman of Rubens equals a virgin of the Italian masters? Our French painters of the eighteenth century, so exclusively pre-occupied with love-scenes, have never found but pretty women on their elegant palettes. Raphael and Correggio, André del Sarto, and Il Parmegiano, on the contrary, have left us types of a finished perfection. The beauty of their women is like a light from heaven. In order to succeed in reproducing this beauty so marvellously in their pic

tures, they must have seen somewhere the original on earth. The truth is that this rare beauty, so pure that even age respects it and alters not the harmony of its lines, exists only among nations favored with a sunny clime. The painters of the North have necessarily failed because on their ungrateful soil models have ever been wanting. The Italian painters have produced their masterpieces, because they most all have found in some beloved woman the incarnation of their ideal. Of all the feminine types, the Southern is at once the most complete and the most difficult to find. On this land, favored above all others, God has not willed that beauty, that emanation of himself, should become corrupted by being too much diffused—that pure gold should be represented by vulgar bullion. Greece and Italy have not been called the classic ground of the beautiful because we find there prettier women than elsewhere, but because the truly beautiful women which are sometimes seen in those countries are the highest expression of human splendor.

She who stood before us offered the living reality of this ideal. It seemed to me, if I were a painter, I would fear to profane one of Raphael's virgins by

copying her. I must beg my reader to excuse me if I do not even attempt to give an imperfect sketch of this woman, before whom the Gioconda and Fornarina themselves would have paled in the time of their greatest brilliancy. Tall and graceful, proud behind her sweet smile, the ancients would have said it was the head of Venus on the body of Diana. Her costume was that of the rich Provençal farm-wife, which she wore with an adorable ease. But the purity of her form, as in a beautiful statue, effaced by its harmonious simplicity the brilliancy of her dress. A moment before, the charming face of the Arlesian servant, the coquetry of her attire, the enticing charm of her figure, had stirred in me a thousand confused sensations; under the radiance of this new apparition, the only sentiment I experienced was that of religious and mute admiration. She was one of those women whose beauty seemed reflected from a world superior to ours, who make us forget that they are women, and whose very perfection forbids a vulgar thought.

"Dona Mion," said the monk addressing her, "we have a guest."

"I was not aware of the presence of a stranger," she replied with sweetness in the Provençal idiom

"If the gentleman will be so kind as to accept for to-day our hospitality as he finds it, to-morrow and after, if it please God, we will endeavor to make him more comfortable."

"There," cried my host, "you see, sir, how my wife understands hospitality. From the moment she has seen you cross our doorstep, she considers you as one of us until you leave." "Dona," he continued, addressing his wife, "will you order the luggage of this gentleman to be brought here from the house where he stops and placed in his room?"

It was useless to offer opposition; I was obliged to yield. The wife of my host then took the lamp and walked before us.

"Dinner is on the table," she said, always speaking in Provençal. "If you will follow me, gentlemen, I will light you."

Entering the dining-room I felt the influence of that gentle and grateful warmth, without which the best repast is only a misery. The lamp that the mistress of the house had placed upon the table shed immediately around us a bright light, while it left throughout the rest of the apartment a gentle, harmonious shade. The dinner was simple but exquisite, cooked to a turn, savory, light. Was it

the result of the salutary exercise which I had been engaged in during the day? Was it the happy disposition of my mind, caused by this picture of delicious well-being, that I had for the moment before my eyes? I cannot say, but never a supper had such a charm. The wife of my host talked but little, using always the Provençal. Without any doubt she was a peasant elevated to the dignity of a lady. Did I witness then without suspecting it the hundredth performance of the witty comedy of "Léon Gozlan," "Le lion empaillé"? The monk of Franquevaux, was he then some fast liver who had withdrawn from the world to marry his servant? At all events, the admirable beauty of the wife fully justified the choice of the husband, and I said to myself, as I contemplated that Grecian profile of sweet purity, and that sculptured form, "folly is often wisdom."

On the right of my host had proudly taken his place an adorable little child of three or four years; he had a bright roguish face, with black, speaking eyes, while his blonde and silken hair fell naturally over his forehead in disordered curls.

"This is my son," he remarked, with all the hap-

piness of a father's pride. "My love for a solitude thus peopled, does it astonish you now?" he added, in a voice of profound and suppressed tenderness.

IV.

After dinner the pretty Arlesian servant brought a bottle of old brandy and two pipes. Madame Vernier took the child up in her arms, and after holding it out to the father, who gave it two tender kisses on its forehead, she discreetly retired.

Plunged in the depths of our easy-chairs, our feet upon the fire-irons, we prepared, the monk and I, to finish quietly the evening.

"My dear sir," said he, being the first to break the silence, "confess that you are a little surprised at all you have seen here!"

I dared not say yes, but certainly my eyes did not say no.

"I am going to astonish you a good deal more," he added. "Your arrival here has been unexpected; you have shared my daily bread, you have seen the details of my private life, and the little comforts with which I delight to charm my solitude, and all this may make you think perhaps that you are visiting an important landed proprietor of the country."

"Most certainly I do."

"What will you say then when I inform you that I possess for my entire fortune but a small farm situated quite near here in the neighborhood of Beauvoisin and Vauvert, and which brings me in on an average only four thousand francs a year. It is true I must count for something in my life this liberty, this happy enjoyment of the fields, which only costs me the trouble of walking over them with my gun upon my shoulder, and which all the pleasures, the most exquisite sights, the most ruinous seductions of Paris could not replace. It is true, I must also count in the wine from my vineyards, the vegetables of my garden, the bread made from my wheat, the poultry from my farm-yard, and the fruits of my orchard which garnish my table. It is equally true that the neighboring ditches and ponds furnish my fish, and the northern hills as well as the marshes of the south never allow me to want for game. Shall I even tell you, all the products of my hunting expeditions are not roasted in my own ovens? In a country where hunting is free, and the only one perhaps in France where it insures the existence of a few peasants who make a regular business of it, I can perfectly, without considering myself a

poacher, sell quite a large portion of the game I kill, especially during the seasons of the great migrations, when I bring down each day a dozen geese or wild ducks, without counting the more rare and more valuable birds. There are certain months of the year in which this interesting part of my income cannot be represented but by two zeros preceded by some respectable unit. The little house that I occupy has cost me less than three thousand francs. I have bought it for the reason that my farm-house is only an uninhabitable barn, and because I am here but two steps from the game of Camargue without being exposed to the fever of the marshes. As to this furniture, which seems to please you, it has cost me less money than search. It was in exploring the farms lost in the Camargue that I have hunted up, in one place, this old easy chair which laid forgotten in a garret; in another place, this buffet that had been left to mould in a corner of a stable; farther on, this carved table, on which shepherds and beggars have eaten their cheese and vinegar in a smoky farm-kitchen; in some other place, again, these curtains have protected beneath their folds the loves of some vulgar boor and his rustic better half. Without doubt the expense of repara-

tion has exceeded the price I paid for them; but even so, I have certainly expended less money to obtain and repair this artistic furniture than it would have cost me to buy new in vulgar mahogany. Moreover, all my purchases have had but one aim—comfort and well-being. I have furnished my dining-room with a certain elegance, because I have always found that one eats with a better appetite when the sight is gratified as well as the taste. I prefer old easy-chairs to modern ones, because they are more comfortable. And lastly, I have decorated my bedroom with somewhat rich draperies and a luxurious bed, because it is also the room of my wife, and whatever the song may say, I believe that love prefers the boudoir to the garret, and silk to straw. So you see that with a little industry and without too much vanity an honest man can, in spite of the great expense of living and the high price of rents such as they pay in Paris, exist in this world; and it is not to the little birds alone that God dispenses food. When the year has passed, I find that I have not denied myself any pleasure I love. I have lived happily, with a healthy body and a light heart, thanking God each day that I was born; my slender income, remaining

almost untouched, turns gradually into capital, whereas most all inhabitants of large cities, after breathing an air vitiated by all sorts of unhealthy emanations, after suffering from all kinds of desires and privations, only see the gulf of their debts enlarged, and feel themselves weighed down under the burden of a gilded misery."

"I envy your lot," I exclaimed.

"I dare say you do," replied my host with a good-humored smile.

"There is, however, one thing which astonishes me: it is this title of monk which the people here obstinately persist in bestowing upon such a philosopher as you. Why, my goodness! monks, if I am correctly informed, make a vow of abstinence. Now I have seen about to what extent you practise that virtue. As to the vow of chastity. . . . ."

"What does it matter?" said he cheerfully, interrupting me. "I allow my neighbors to have their own say in that, as there is in reality some truth in the name they have given me. Like the monks of past times, is it not after all the dispelling of illusions, the detachment from the vanities of the world, which has thrown me in this solitude? Who tells you even that, before resolving to exile myself here,

I have not suffered from some incurable wound of the heart, as well as those men who, worn by passion, have sought repose in the cloister? Only while they fled from society with a bitter contempt, I experience for it but a gentle and indulgent disdain. As to their superhuman virtues, that religious ardor which they extended to suffering and maceration, I must confess I do not feel the courage for it. Is that my fault? and moreover cannot one be a perfectly honest man and even an excellent Christian without sleeping on the points of nails, and without subsisting exclusively on vegetables? In all that is humane and universal, I may be compared to them; what distinguishes me from them is the personal and material part of my tastes and habits. I am too much a man of my time not to cherish my comfort. I recognize its legitimacy, I hail in it a natural law and a social progress. God is too just to seat us at the banquet that he has himself served, for the purpose of condemning us to suffer the pagan torments of Tantalus. Provided I never refuse a portion of my bread or a place at my fire to the poor man who holds out his hand or knocks at my door for charity, what does it signify if I have a dish more at my dinner, and that my bed is soft and

my house warm. The people of the country are not mistaken, and are perfectly convinced that they will always find in me a friend to assist them when they are in need, and they do not envy me the little material gratifications I procure for myself in my hermitage. I therefore accept without scruple or opposition the epithet they have been pleased to bestow upon me, knowing perfectly how much of truth and of exaggeration there is in it; and saying to myself that, after all, many monks have entombed themselves alive in the desert who have not suffered more from the world, and who have not felt for the vices of their age more contempt than I have for the deceptions of my own time."

"Agree with me, my dear host, that these confessions, made with so much reserve, are well calculated to excite the most good-natured curiosity."

"Really?" he replied, smiling. "Well! your curiosity shall be gratified, although I cannot explain to myself how the recital of an existence so commonplace as mine should inspire you with the least interest. A review of my past life will be for me what an old man would feel travelling once more over countries already seen in the days of his youth. But to-night it is too late; our lamp becomes dim,

our fire has almost gone out, and eleven has just struck on the grave bell of the clock. I have arranged in your honor a partridge hunt for to-morrow, and we must be up by sunrise; so then, to bed."

Thereupon he took the lamp, and, with as little ceremony as if we had been friends for twenty years, he showed me to my room, and gently closed the door, not without having first pressed my hand and wished me a peaceful night and the sweetest of dreams.

V.

I WAS yet in a profound sleep when my host entered my room, candle in hand.

"Come," said he, "make haste and get up. It is now daybreak, and our men are below."

Our hunting companions were already waiting for us in the kitchen, gayly seated around a table placed before a large fire, clear and sparkling, made of vine branches and brushwood. Two of them were armed with guns, while the remaining four had sticks or whips.

"Master," said one of them in patois to my host, "the wine is good; we will be light-footed to-day."

"There is not a breath of wind," said another, "and I do not think it will rise with the sun, because the sky was not red in the west last evening at sunset."

After a parting glass, each took his bag and gun, and we went out.

The morning was keen and clear. In the east the horizon was already purple with that bright and concentrated light which precedes the rising of the sun. In the distance, toward the south and west, a

thin mist floated over the marshes and ponds. The last stars were fading away, and the skylark, shooting upward, gave a joyous cry as if to salute the day.

Our little company divided in two parties; the first, composed of the men with guns, took the lead; the second, formed of those who were to turn off the game, followed in a slightly-oblique direction toward the left, in order to embrace a larger tract of ground, as well as to leave us the time to reach our posts. When we had gone about a mile, the monk pointed out to me a bush by the side of a vine and motioned for me to crouch. He took his place on the same line, some hundred yards farther, and our two companions imitated him, keeping between them an equal distance.

After ten minutes waiting, some distant cries came vaguely to my ears. Little by little the noise drew nearer; I heard the snapping of the whips, the excited voices and the shrill whistle of our men, who with their heavy sticks beat the ground. Very soon three or four shots fired from my right awoke my attention. At the same moment I saw shoot forth to the horizon what appeared like a black and movable point. Before

the shout of the men: *Avisa!* had reached me, a partridge passed over my head rapidly as a leaf carried by a hurricane, and the same point appeared already, almost imperceptible, at the other extremity of the horizon. Quite confused by the noise and the speed, I had not thought of either aiming or firing. The monk of Franquevaux, without changing his position, fired his two shots at two partridges which had ventured within his range, and killed them both.

There was another silence. The men continued to move toward us; they were quite near, when all of a sudden a new company of frightened partridges rose with a great clatter from the side of the vines where we were posted, and passed like a whirlwind near my host, who, for the second time, without the least excitement, without even abandoning his pipe or changing his position, brought down two more birds.

By this time the men had finished their rounds. I went up to Maurice Vernier, to whom I expressed my admiration for his coolness and dexterity.

"Bah!" he smilingly replied, "a mere matter of habit, that is all. When you have burnt as much powder as I, you will shoot just as well. Only

remember that to hit the red partridge on the wing, is not a shot of precision, but a shot of judgment. Calculate, on taking aim, the swiftness of the bird, the distance he is from you, and send your shot in advance of him in the line he follows. If you aim at the bird itself you will surely miss."

The sun by this time was up and radiant. The sky, of a limpid blue, promised one of those soft, glorious November days which in the South make us live over again the most beautiful days of May, shaded only by that tint of melancholy which is the poetry of Autumn. All around us we could see the farmers bent over their furrows, and chanting some monotonous melody. As we passed sufficiently near to hear their voices and reply to them, there was a shower of cries, questions, and noisy words of curiosity, which proved to me to what an extent the passion of hunting exists among the people of this country. Several left their mules and came over to us: "Well! have you had good luck? Ah! it is the monk, they will have need of every feather in their wings to-day, poor things. And the hare? Have you seen the hare?"

The hare is the legendary animal, the fantastic

game, the monster of Gévaudan * of the hunters of that region.

Toward eleven o'clock, after several battues, which all proved my host to be a most extraordinary shot, our little troop halted for breakfast, near a large well, surrounded by grand old trees. I will leave you to imagine if we did justice to the Arles sausages, and the old wine of Saint-Gilles. In the evening, after we had divided our game, we went back to Franquevaux, and each one in fine humor and good appetite regained his home. I, above all, who was not made for such excursions through the soft earth of the ploughed fields and the pebbly vineyards, experienced that lassitude which is not exactly fatigue, and which is already a desire for rest—delightful state of being, a kind of strengthening and manly voluptuousness that invariably follows a violent exercise in the open air. The rapidity with which the day had passed, the interest these thousand little incidents had inspired me, the forgetfulness of all painful pre-occupation that the absorbing distractions of the hunt had plunged me in, the intimate contentment that I experienced throughout my whole being, revealed to me the

* A famous animal which in the last century spread terror and dismay in the province of Gévaudan (lower Languedoc).

charm of this healthy and free existence which had become a necessity for my host, and I now began to understand how he had finally come to prefer the easy carelessness of his solitary life, so varied in its uniformity, so active under its apparent inaction, to the feverish pleasures of large cities.

The supper was ready and waiting for us. By the air of proud satisfaction with which the mistress of the house offered me certain dishes, I could plainly see that she had a hand in their composition, and as I am fond of good living, I could only congratulate myself upon it. Always serious and smiling, attentive and discreet, she presided over the repast with the silent dignity of a queen of Homer. I could not cease admiring this grave and serene beauty seemingly so unconscious of herself, that Athenian profile of such admirable purity, and that bust which recalled the most marvellous productions of Grecian art, at the same time saying to myself, while tasting the appetizing stews of the Provençal kitchen, that my queen of Homer was equal to any Parisian cordon bleu. After supper she withdrew, as on the previous night, with a silent adieu full of reserve and grace, and I remained alone with the monk of Franquevaux.

"Permit me," I said to him, when we were comfortably seated, after having filled our pipes, and before the smoking cups of coffee brought us by the Arlesian coquette, "permit me to remind you of your promise of telling me your history. I am eager for you to commence. We have everything to ourselves; the fragrance of this coffee has already revived my spirits, and has made me forget my fatigue. We will never find a more propitious moment."

"Then you really wish it?" he replied. "I have warned you, however, that my prosaic life does not offer a single exceptional attraction. It is only because I have felt, perhaps more keenly than others, those little contrarieties in life from which no one escapes in the world, that I have taken refuge in this solitude."

"So much the better!" I said, interrupting him; "romantic exceptions, simply because they are exceptions, have no value whatever in my eyes."

He then extended his feet on a chair placed before him, settled himself a little deeper in his arm-chair, poured out and sipped a small glass of old brandy, urging me to do the same, and commenced thus:

PART SECOND.

TWENTY YEARS IN PARIS.

PART SECOND.

TWENTY YEARS IN PARIS.

I.

My earliest recollections carry me back to a period very remote from the present. It was in 1815; I was four years of age. I see yet, as through the mists of a dream, my poor mother, seated, overcome with grief, by the side of my father, who, dressed as a chasseur, with his gun hanging over his shoulder, and the white cockade on his hat, held me in his arms and covered me with caresses.

"Well, the hour has come," said he finally, in a resolute tone, setting me down and tearing himself away from the last embrace of my mother.

The latter suppressed a sob, and with a voice she exerted herself in vain to strengthen:

"Courage!" she remarked. "God, who loves France, will protect the honest people who love their king."

Left alone she turned toward me, and looked at me for a moment, her eyes moist with tears; then her pent-up grief gave way, and, leaning over, she pressed me to her heart with an expression of ardent tenderness, and murmured in my ear between two kisses:

"Dear little one, before you I can weep. Before him my tears would have been cowardly, because they would only have saddened him without having power to keep him with us."

This scene occurred at Tarascon, where my father had gone in order to join the little army of volunteers that the Duke of Angoulême commanded on the borders of the Rhône. Like all the Catholic population of the province, my father had thrown himself into this royalist movement with a sort of mystical exaltation. My mother, also a royalist, and more catholic still than he, had herself encouraged him to take up arms for the cause, that she called the cause of God, and it was her desire to accompany him as far as the last halting-place. The improvised soldiers of the king were no match against the veteran troops of the emperor. The campaign was short. Still my father did not return without wounds. After the capitulation of the royalist

troops, as he was crossing a village hostile to the white flag, the mob pursued him with stones, and crying furiously, "Death to the miquelet!" Fortunately for him, some honest people coming to the rescue succeeded in getting him out of the hands of the populace. He escaped with only the cut of a scythe, given him by some enraged fellow upon his shoulder, and from the effects of which he always bore the scar.

At the second return of the Bourbons, my father refused to set forth his devotion to their cause as a claim to royal favor, and contented himself by retaining for them in the depths of his heart a passionate fidelity. His opinions, alternately soured by defeat and exalted by success, partook of a religious superstition rather than a political conviction. Under the influence of his example and his faith I grew up with the same sentiments, and at the age of eight or ten years I lisped, with the same instinctive fervor, the cry of "Vive le Roi!" as I did my morning and evening prayer.

Restored again to his home, my father resumed his usual habits. Ten thousand francs of income, joined to the two hundred thousand which constituted the fortune of my mother, insured him an

honorable existence and allowed him to attend to the wants of the poor around him. More than one-third of his revenue was consecrated to intelligent and discreet charities; all the unfortunate of the country knew his door and blessed his name. It seemed as if his charity had found the art of multiplying his resources, and whether it was convenient or not, his purse was always made to respond to the appeals of his heart. He passed seven or eight months of the year in the country, superintending his haying, harvests, and vintage, and his winters at Montpellier. Very soon, however, this peaceable and easy life became irksome to him. His intelligent mind was tormented by a restless desire for activity. Serious studies, favored by a natural talent, had made him a chemist of the first order, and the consciousness that he had of his merits spurred on his self-love and incited him to publish his works. He had just made an invention invaluable for our country, a kind of distilling apparatus, to facilitate the transformation of wine into brandy; but only preoccupied with the glory of his discovery, he disdained to realize the profit, and saw nothing in it but a triumph for his vanity. A devouring thirst for celebrity was in reality—together with his charity, henceforth pro-

verbial throughout the country—the only passion of my poor father, his happiness, his life. He not only sacrificed with all his heart the legitimate salary of his labors to some trivial compliments of the drawing-room, but he would have sacrificed to them, if needs be, his very fortune. For him, the shadow was the desired goal.

At the age of twelve or thirteen I entered college. Without modesty I proclaim that I left it crowned with all the laurels and all the volumes bound in calf that the University lavishes on its graduates. These remembrances are always vivid in my mind, and often in my dreams I see myself crossing the college-court, amid the flourish of trumpets and applause, to receive my crowns upon the stage where were seated the brilliant Areopagus, in their red robes and embroidered coats. Dangerous apprenticeship of life! Among all these heroes of Greek theme and Latin verse, how many are there not to whom the illusions of school success, followed by the deceptions of riper years, have only served to render life more bitter!

My father was intoxicated with my triumphs. Could he, who so doted upon the cajoleries of opinion and the caresses of the public, he so flat-

tered by the slightest eulogy in some country newspaper, could he imagine a sweeter or more intense joy than this clapping of hands, these trumpets, these noisy acclamations bestowed upon my name, which was his? After my brilliant studies, if I equally distinguished myself through a course of law, what else would there remain for me to wish for? As little seriously ambitious for me as for himself, my father was more pre-occupied with the triumphs of my self-love than with the exigencies of my future. Chemist as he was, you see that he was still more an artist, with all the disinterestedness, all the amiable improvidence, all the imperious vanity of the artist. Although a professed royalist, he was so only in principle, for practically, and in his own family he cultivated but little the idea of "hereditary succession," since he so readily sacrificed the interests of the latter to the gratification of self-love and personal ambition.

After three years, passed at the law-schools of Toulouse and Aix, I returned to the country with my mother, whom I devotedly loved, and who was then suffering from the first attacks of a disease of the lungs. I have not yet spoken to you of my mother—she was a saint! I adored and I ven-

erated her. How could I help devoting myself with all my soul to that tender, resigned, and angelic being? I see her yet with her pale features, her emaciated face, and her eyes brilliant with a feverish fire. She felt her life consuming away within her, without shedding a tear, without offering a complaint, concealing from us her frightful sufferings, in order to spare us a moment of unhappiness. My affection for my father was mingled with I know not what impression of jealousy, awakened in my heart by the love of self which devoured him, and by that thirst for vulgar celebrity which concealed from us the best part of his nature. My mother only lived in us and for us. Her malady made rapid progress. I conjured her to pass the winter under the more genial skies of Nice; but she refused, not wishing to leave for a single moment my father, who, on account of his labors, was obliged to remain in France. Finally one day, one of those sad, rainy days of November, when the south wind scatters about under a cold gray sky the last leaves of autumn, the doctor announced to us that there was no more hope.

At these words my host stopped, as if oppressed by a frightful dream. A moment of painful silence

ensued, and I saw some tears roll over that sun-bronzed face.

"Have you your mother yet, sir?" he inquired with a trembling voice.

"Thank God, yes," I replied, by a motion of the head rather than with my lips.

"You would not then be able, whatever love you bear to her, to understand the rending of your whole being when is torn from your side, in order to ascend to heaven, that creature who has given you birth, nourished you from her bosom, and whose very life is yours." In spite of all my tenderness, I could not have conceived before experiencing it what were the sombre depths of such a grief.

He remained silent again; then with a visible effort:

That day," he continued, "she was quietly seated in her large easy-chair between my father and myself, her face turned towards the winter sun, which was also pale as she. We pressed her hands in ours, as if to keep with us that dear soul, ready to take its flight. All of a sudden, without speaking, without tears, she fastened upon us a long, lingering look, accompanied by an ineffable expression of love, the sweetness of which had nothing left

of earth, smiled sadly, and drooped her head Ah! what memories are these! what sad, sad memories! . . . The next day I accompanied her to her last resting-place. As far as the cemetery I walked with a firm step; but there, before that hideous and yawning grave, about to ingulf what seemed to me a part of my own being, when I heard the dull noise of the stones." . . .

A sob stifled the voice of the monk of Franquevaux.

"Then," murmured he through his tears, "then everything seemed shattered within me and around me; a black cloud passed before my eyes, the ground appeared to steal away from under my feet. . . . Only in the evening I returned to consciousness in my bed, where my father, standing by my pillow, awaited with anxiety my return to life."

During several days he did not leave me. I blamed myself for so badly mastering my grief, and so constantly reviving the sorrow of that excellent man by the spectacle of my own. The thought that I must henceforth live alone on the earth crushed me, for between my father and me, my mother had always seemed the link that held us more closely together. The want of activity and renown which

dominated him, might it not end by taking him away also, thus making me doubly an orphan? These were my thoughts, when finally, at the end of a few weeks, I saw him take up again with renewed ardor his favorite occupations. "Labor can alone console," he said. But, alas! labor had no solace for me. Giving himself up entirely to his scientific researches, he endeavored thereby to drown his unhappiness, going, coming, hurrying, never stopping two days in the same place, multiplying his experiments, devoting all his time and all his energies to the development of his discoveries — and above all his celebrity. From Paris and London constantly arrived chemical instruments of every description, the house was encumbered with alembics, retorts, and furnaces of all dimensions. I never knew exactly the amount my father expended on these numerous purchases, I only felt uneasy about this incessant labor on the score of his health, and never suspected that this devotion to science could prove disastrous to his fortune. The success of his self-love was to him a remuneration for all his trouble and expense, and I inwardly blessed a passion which gave to his lonely life and his griefs such powerful distractions. What days of rejoicing

were those when my poor father discovered in the papers of the Department some lines in honor of his inventions or his pamphlets; the joy of his heart shone in his look; he carried his head higher; the dry pavement of the street resounded clearer under his more nimble feet, and on his lips one could read a sort of benevolent commiseration for the poor beings who had never merited the honors of publicity.

The solitude in which my father lived, his multiplied labors, his incessant activity, his indifference for everything which related to his material comfort, at length suggested to me many serious reflections. He was yet young; would he not think sooner or later of marrying again? That nature so impressionable, so delicate, could it live without an intimacy, a support, a companion to surround him with the material cares of existence? I loved and respected him too much not to feel that any opposition on my part to such a desire, should such a one ever be formed, would be improper and cruel. On the other hand, my tenderness for my poor mother, my holy veneration for her, would have rendered the presence of another woman in that house too grievous for me. In order to conciliate

these two opposite sentiments, I saw there was but one thing to do. I resolved to go away. The sadness which overpowered me was besides transformed into a kind of sickly melancholy, which the physicians all agreed it was important I should throw off, and which my father implored me each day to combat with all my energy. I made him acquainted with my project.

"An excellent plan!" he said, highly gratified at the announcement. "This is a thought worthy of the blood that flows through your veins. Yes, go to Paris, my son. Ah! why did I not go there myself in my youth? There alone can one make a name!" . . .

I did go, but I might have dispensed with the journey, since the idea of leaving was suggested to me solely by the desire to further any possible arrangements my father might wish to make. He did not remarry, and I might have foreseen it. Could he experience henceforth another love than that of admiration and fame which hovered around his name, and was he not one of those men destined from their very natures to live alone, for whom personal distinctions, the enjoyments of vanity, and the pursuits of their chimerical fancies, take the place

of all the emotions of family life? Remaining alone he plunged more profoundly into his absorbing labors, and the entire house assumed the aspect of an immense laboratory.

The revolution of July, which had just broken out, was alone able to reanimate the heat of his Jacobinism and snatch him for a moment from his habitual occupations. During a few days I even feared some imprudence from his irritated royalism. Fortunately the rapidity of the crisis, and the wisdom of those who restrained in these difficult days our excited population, prevented a movement which could have only had for result to draw upon that part of the country a terrible and prompt repression.

About this time I had observed that my father kept up a warm and active correspondence with the Count de Brugal, one of his oldest friends, whose life he had had the good fortune to save during the short royalist campaign on the borders of the Rhône, and who, since 1815, had lived in Paris. The family of Brugal, who came from the lower Languedoc, was one whose origin dated back from the most remote antiquity; only their ancestors had bequeathed them more authentic parchments than historical records. The present count, little known as

he was outside a certain political circle, was by far the most illustrious man of his antique race. He honorably resigned, the day after the revolution of July, the lucrative position which he occupied under the Restoration, and which had secured during fifteen years the existence of his family, ruined by the first revolution.

On leaving, my father gave me a letter to him. Provided with this introduction I was sure of a friendly and almost paternal reception. The fortune of the count was not sufficient to allow him to live very elegantly in Paris. However, the antiquity of his name, the high offices he had held, and the solidity of his political opinions maintained his authority over the aristocratic society and the royalist party, and in his modest home I was sure to find more than one useful protector.

II.

The Count de Brugal received me with cordiality. He was a man about forty-five years of age, with a pleasing countenance, a clear, sympathetic voice full of kindness, and a warmth of manner suggesting the soldier rather than the courtier or diplomatist.

"Young man," he said, extending me his hand; "your father is my best friend, and I regret for the first time, on seeing you, my lost influence. Never mind, if I can do nothing of myself, there yet remain some friends to me, whom I will interest in your future. The conduct of M. Vernier towards me has imposed on me a debt that my entire life would be insufficient to repay."

"A debt?" I inquired with astonishment.

"What! you do not know?" he exclaimed with vivacity. "Noble heart! his discretion doubles the value of his devotion. Thank Heaven, I am not bound by the same reserve. Yes, my friend, your father after my resignation thought that my affairs might be somewhat embarrassed, and wrote to me,

in the name of our old friendship, and placed his entire fortune at my disposal."

The correspondence of my father with the count was at last explained. I felt within me an intense pride to find myself the protector of my protector!

"And now," he observed, with an animated voice, "let them come and talk to me of the divisions and antipathies that exist between the different classes of society, of the envy of the one and the pride of the other. As for me, I only make two distinctions, the scoundrels and the honest people; the nobility as well as the rest of mankind has its due share of both."

I assented without replying. He continued:

"What means, if you please, that big word of liberalism which divides us all? Your father is an obstinate royalist, is he not? Do you know, however, a mind more independent, a heart more generous than his? They call me an aristocrat; I was put in office by the 'last tyrant.' That honest, loyal, good Charles X., a tyrant! . . . . Well, let them show me a man more liberal at heart than I. It is not by vain words, by invoking on all occasions, in order to violate them more freely afterwards, these principles of '89, which have so broad a back,

that a government proves its liberalism; it is by its acts. Now the government which I mourn found despotism, but has left us liberty. It found France invaded by strangers, overwhelmed with debt, bled to the last drop, and has handed it over, free, flourishing, and rich, to the king of the revolution. It found, the day after Waterloo, an army enfeebled by disease, exhausted by misery, decimated by the cannon, mutilated remnants of twenty glorious campaigns, and gave it back, the day after the capture of Algiers, reconstituted, victorious, formidable. We found a soil trodden by the foreigner, a disorganized power, and we have inaugurated a government which, after nobly resuming in Europe the rank that the deplorable misfortunes of the empire had caused France to lose, had finally grown strong enough, when our good neighbors, the English, wanted to prevent us from planting our flag in Africa, to send them about their business. It is true," added he, with a bitter smile, "that England has paid it back, capital and interest. The royal family, who travel at this moment from France to Scotland, and from Scotland to Germany, know something of that."

In speaking thus, the count grew quite enthusias-

tic; the frankness of his gesture and the sincerity of his language charmed me. Under these generous words I felt every fibre of my royalism vibrate. A little more, and I would have called out "Vive le Roi," even with more enthusiasm than my father himself.

"And do not believe," continued the Count de Brugal, "that I speak in my own name alone. I will introduce you in society, and you will judge for yourself whether the most sensitive patriotism has ever spoken a different language than ours. As to myself, may the occasion come to prove my liberalism, and then you will see. . . .

"Meanwhile," he continued, changing his tone, "my house is yours. Do me the pleasure of dining with us this evening; I will present you to the countess. Until you have completed your arrangements, a place will be kept for you at my table. Faith! I will not say it is the old régime, for it is rather a poor one, this régime of ours; but however that may be, if our modest home suits you, you will be treated with us like a son."

Accordingly, the same evening the Count de Brugal introduced me to his wife. Notwithstanding my slight experience of the world, I instantly

recognized in her the high-born lady. In the most flattering acceptation of the word, she was *distinguée* without effort, intelligent without pretension, holding her position without undue superiority, affectionate without familiarity, and lastly, kind and simple, without for a moment becoming commonplace. Meanwhile it was easy to see that she was yet far from the somewhat loud liberalism of her husband. If, to a degree, she could understand it was necessary to admit to power certain men chosen from the ranks of a people apart from the nobility, she could not make up her mind to open her drawing-rooms to their wives. She looked upon those people with the same air of protecting superiority as a Rachel or a Malibran must have considered a poor itinerant actress. Her royalist opinions were with her an affair of blood, her aristocratic instincts a matter of nerve. As to the events which had just been accomplished, she manifested for them neither hatred nor anger; she simply looked upon them with contempt.

The two children of the house dined with us; one was a boy of eight years, named Robert, one of those lovely little fellows, with clear complexion and blue eyes, who look everywhere alike among all aristocracies, and may be seen gravely seated in

the emblazoned coaches of their mothers, in Hyde Park, or in the Champs Elysées; the other was a young lady of seventeen years, graceful and beautiful, who owed to the traditional veneration of the Brugals for I cannot say what unknown heroine of their race the somewhat strange and feudal name of Iolande, which name had been religiously transmitted from generation to generation to the eldest daughter of the family.

My protector was not satisfied by admitting me to the intimacy of his domestic fireside; he wished to introduce me also into the brilliant world in which he lived, and, thanks to him, I found myself well received in several houses of the old nobility. Those salons resplendent with gold and light, those high-sounding titles in the midst of which came out so poorly my vulgar name, those beautiful women rendered more beautiful still by the simplicity of their attire, those diplomats bedecked with ribbons of every color—so much grace, luxury, and elegance dazzled me. Afterwards, however, this sort of enthusiasm vanished and gave place to a sentiment of an entirely different nature. In spite of the friendly reception which was bestowed on me, I finally grew ill at ease in a world where I was not

born; the truth is I did not feel at home there. Instinctively I understood that our political relation was the only tie which connected me with them. Under the expressions of sincere cordiality which were lavished upon me, it was easy, when my name was pronounced for the first time, for me to observe certain little imperceptible signs of sympathetic astonishment, which proved what an abyss separated me from the society where I had the honor of being received. I felt that my opinions procured me an admittance by favor, but that I was not entitled to be there by right. If I was sought with so much eagerness, it was because the presence of a man of my name in their salons appeared to these minds, so inclined to illusion, so prompt to hope, the most brilliant proof they could give of their liberalism, and, at the same time, a significant symptom of the reaction which according to them commenced to manifest itself among the bourgeoisie in favor of the monarchy.

Moreover, it is only after a long time and by the lesson of experience that all these reflections have come back to my mind. At the period of which I speak, I never thought to account to myself for the involuntary embarrassment that I experienced in

these circles of the nobility, nor above all to ascertain the secret motive of a reception which I found quite natural. Did we not share the same sentiments? Were we not subjects of the same king, slaves of the same faith? Did not my fortune also allow me to appear with honor in that world to which I had already linked myself by so many powerful arguments?

Ten or twelve thousand francs of income—this was about the amount left me by my poor mother—were perfectly sufficient at that time for all the requirements of a bachelor's existence, which then was much less costly than at the present day. I lived in the rue du Bac. My apartments were furnished with taste, almost luxury; the windows opened on a very beautiful garden. A carriage that I hired for the six winter months came for me every evening; and more than once at a late hour, on going home, some old nobleman, who had come either in a hack or on foot, did me the honor to accept a seat in my conveyance. My train of life put me thus on a footing of perfect equality with all the gay, titled youth whom I met in the world.

One circumstance more serious still contributed to thicken, during a certain time, the veil of my illu-

sions. The Count de Brugal, always so kindly disposed towards me, had introduced me to the chief editors of two royalist papers where he exercised a great influence. In these I published several articles which were noticed, and which brought me, in the salons I frequented, all sorts of compliments and eager flatteries. Accepted as a defender, applauded as a writer by the most punctilious of their class, living a life the most elegant, I confess that it was almost impossible for me then to take a correct view of my situation among them, as well as I have been able to do since.

My winter thus passed away, divided between my successes in the drawing-room and as a journalist. Even with the opposition papers, I had rapidly made for myself a reputation for moderation and loyalty which had gained me their good feeling, and several times the ministerial or republican papers, in replying to my articles, had expressed a regret that their author, to whom such a beautiful future seemed reserved if he had entered into the current of new ideas, should remain attached, without profit, to a lost cause. These advances, repulsed by me, only served to augment my credit in the seducing society where I was adopted, and I confess I felt

the most delicate fibres of my vanity flattered by the marks of esteem which were lavished upon me, while at the same time I enjoyed in the depths of my soul that delight, still more manly and more noble, which is at once the strength and recompense of every man who combats for his faith. And, indeed, had not my royalism at that moment of my life, stirred as it was by the excitement of newspaper controversy, by my success as a writer, and by my enjoyment of self-love, all the sincerity, all the ardor, all the fanaticism of the most blinded faith?

III.

At the first approach of summer, the elegant society of Paris dispersed, to seek the cool retreat of their châteaux. The Count de Brugal no longer possessed his properties in the South. For some time back the family country-seat, the old turrets of which I had so often admired in my childhood, had fallen into the hands of a shawl merchant, who had made a fortune in the business. The count, therefore, passed the summer season in a modest villa which he had recently purchased in the environs of Paris. Before going, he made me promise to come and spend a few days with him in his family.

At these words the hunter of the Camargue paused as if he hesitated to pursue his narrative.

"Excuse my weakness," he remarked, with a painful smile. "I touch here on a grievous point in my life." . . .

Following the example of the monk, I lighted my pipe, took a sip from my glass, and, judging by his emotion that I was now to hear the secret of his

life, I arranged myself, without making any observations, to listen to the sequel of his history.

"According to my promise," said he, "I went at the end of a month to make my visit to the count. My arrival was looked upon as a fête in the house, as my presence there was likely to reanimate a little the conversations and vary the monotony. La Morlière—this was the name of the place—was one of those graceful country houses of which you see so many in the neighborhood of Paris—a kind of miniature château, with the little green lawn in front, the customary marble fountain, a park of a couple of acres fenced in by walls, and the main avenue closed off by a gate of painted wood or iron. It was situated near the Maison Lafitte half way up the hill, which offers a beautiful view of the tortuous windings of the Seine, and is crowned by the noble forest of Saint-Germain. The windows opened upon the immense plain, at the extremity of which surges in the horizon, through an aureole of light mists, Paris with its domes and monuments. The house was charming, and its equal proximity to river and forest invited us each day to new excursions as pleasant as they were picturesque. Sometimes we liked, the count and I, while conversing

on the doings of the day, to wander through the long and silent avenues of the forest; sometimes we went in his little boat on some distant expedition to the banks of the Pecq or Croissy. Often Mademoiselle de Brugal expressed a desire to accompany us, and her father took pleasure in granting her this innocent recreation. Two or three times in the course of the previous winter I had had the honor of dancing with her, without attaching much importance to this ordinary favor. During these first excursions I likewise paid her only the respectful deference due from any well-bred man to a young lady. Very soon, however, I was struck by some little peculiarities in her manner, which probably would not have been noticed by any one but myself. It seemed to me she found a rather unusual pleasure in following us in our rambles. In the evening at the hour for tea, she came to take her seat by my side at the large round table in the drawing-room. With a charming simplicity she filled and even served me my cup, knowing exactly the size and number of pieces of sugar I was accustomed to take, and pouring the precise quantity of drops of milk or rum with which I liked to color my tea. Then, when the waiter was removed, she never failed to

seat herself with her embroidery at the other extremity of the room. This persistent childishness at first mystified me, when one evening, by chance, on suddenly raising my eyes to a mirror placed in front of me, I encountered those of Iolande fixed on mine. Surprised and slightly blushing, she quickly bent her pretty head over her work. So then it was in order to observe me better, without being observed herself, that she had chosen, every evening, this distant place. But if I no longer had any doubt as to the object of her conduct, I endeavored in vain to guess what could be the motive of it. I was no more presumptuous then than I am now, and as slightly as you know me, sir, you can already judge for yourself if conceit is one of the weaknesses of the monk of Franquevaux. At last, however, I was obliged to yield to evidence."

One day as we were assembled in the garden with some friends, I playfully presented a rose to a lady, who hardly noticed my floral gallantry and fastened, without thinking, the flower in her belt. Iolande was standing a few steps off and appeared not to notice it. After a few moments she approached with the most natural air, and began con-

versing with us. All at once, without affectation, while talking and laughing:

"What a pretty rose you have there!" she remarked; and with an adorably-played thoughtlessness she took the flower which I had just offered, trifled with it for a moment, and finally placed it in her corsage.

"How is that, my child," said her mother reprovingly; "if you wish a rose, are there not plenty in the garden, and would you rob Madame of a flower that has been given her?"

"Given," replied the young girl; "oh! I beg your pardon, Madame, I was not aware." . . .

And hastily throwing the flower away, she left with a little pouting air and with an affected gayety, which was betrayed, however, by two tears which I saw glisten in her eyes. During this rapid scene her glance met mine, and under its sudden flash I felt myself tremble, as under the shock of an electric spark.

"Sir," said my host, interrupting himself anew, "this occurred thirty years ago. Since that day, this young girl, after becoming a lady, has caused me to drink deeply from the cup of bitterness. In order to dissipate my grief I have sought, by turns,

forgetfulness in pleasure and in work. I have tried everything. My heart is hardened like a badly-healed wound. This remembrance of myself at twenty years has not lost anything of its freshness. The senses may become numb; but when all is dead within us, the heart alone can yet live."

The monk ceased speaking. With his forehead bent over his chest, and his eyes fixed on the half-extinct fire, he remained for a moment motionless and thoughtful. I respected his silence. Soon, though, shaking his head, as if to chase away thoughts that overpowered him, he mastered his grief. His face resumed its habitual expression of careless irony, and without it being possible to detect on his countenance the slightest trace of the emotion with which for a moment he had been overcome, he continued tranquilly his narrative.

The flash of that eye shone forth like lightning in a storm. Was not the storm already raging in my heart? At twenty years, to believe one's self loved, is to love.

From that moment forward our relations completely changed character. Under her look, I, who until then had been so calm before her, became timid and paralyzed. My emotion betrayed itself when

addressing her, and the sound of her voice threw me into an indescribable confusion. In the evening, if she came at the customary hour to take her place at my side, the rustling of her dress alone made me tremble to the innermost recesses of my soul. Our eyes fell when they met. Our hands, which were so often pressed in friendship, avoided each other, as if they feared their mutual clasp. I felt her coming when the distance was too great for my ear to detect the sound of her step. What shall I say? There is but one word for it . . . . I loved her!

A few days passed thus, in the delicious uncertainty of incipient love. In the morning, while in the garden, I could see her at the window of her room, and I greeted her with an eager awkwardness which made her smile. During the long walks we took in the presence of her father, we scarcely addressed each other any direct word; but how well our eyes knew what to say, if our lips did not! With her white parasol in her hand, she ran before us, gracefully revealing in her light course the harmonious outline of her figure. In my soul I never left her. Although I might have avoided all allusion to the sentiment she inspired me with, it seemed to me I could no more doubt her love than she could

have doubted mine. Need I say to you that my affection for the count had transformed itself into a truly filial devotion, and that I loved the father of Iolande as my own? Their little home seemed to my eyes a hundred times more magnificent than the old château of Brugal, which I had so much admired in former days, perched on its hill, and gilded by three centuries of southern sun; but the other was much dearer; it was as dear to me as the home of my birth. Was I not in reality just born again, into the true life—that of love? Alas! what is any other?

IV.

The time had come for me to tear myself away from this dream, and to leave La Morlière, but not without having first promised my friends to return during the hunting season. Paris had henceforth lost for me its prestige. When I came back, I found its streets, boulevards, and theatres, sad, solitary, gloomy. It seemed to me that from the realm of the sun I had been suddenly precipitated into darkness. I sought in vain some distraction in study, but the image of my dear Iolande would constantly come and place itself between my books and me. She would appear with her smile, somewhat proud, and yet so sweet, with her profound look, her caressing voice ;—attractive without coquetry, under the thick bands of her black hair, and her face tinted with the warm and delicate reflex of a generous blood. The only happy moments of my exile were those in which I had occasion to see the count, who came sometimes to breathe the air of Paris, and to whom I clung from the moment I ascertained his

arrival, as a drowning man would do to the one who rescues him.

The few friends I had made for myself in the world or among my brother journalists, offered to share with me their pleasures. You know the amusements which Paris offers in the summer. Boating, country balls in the environs, public gardens peopled with trees yellowed by gas, and women yellowed by vice; this is the whole programme.

Of all the pretty women, whom I chanced to see, there was but one who in any way attracted my notice. Her mother, I was told, was an old ballet-dancer, who had abandoned art for industry and opened a small shop for the sale of perfumery, in the Rue Lafitte. But if the wily dancer had renounced the pomps of Satan, the old glove woman still clung to his works. Madame Dumont, who had heard that I was a rich young man, received me with all sorts of grimaces, which she intended for smiles. I did not feel much flattered at the idea of being the object of her miserable old coquetries, and was in a measure relieved when my comrades suggested that it was not on her own account she was so amiable and tender, but that it was all in behalf of her daughter. It is needless for me to say, that these

manœuvrings were only wasted upon my bruised heart; still I could not help feeling a secret pity for the poor child, who, situated as she was, was inevitably doomed beforehand to ruin and misery. This involuntary sentiment of sympathy will be naturally explained to you when I say that Cora—such was her name—was the living portrait of Iolande. The same form, the same look, the same features; one would have said twin sisters; and so much they were alike that more than once I asked myself if the Count de Brugal, at the time of his splendor and success, had not left, without being aware of it, in the side scenes of the opera, this living trace of his brilliant passage. The apparent interest with which this strange resemblance inspired me deceived the old mother, who, persuaded that I was captivated with her daughter, redoubled her attentions toward me. The latter from her side seemed not to view me with a too cruel eye. Brought up under traditions of an unavoidable corruption, so well described by Mérimée in Arsène Guillot, she was resigned beforehand to accept the first protector whom chance or sentiment might throw in her way. As for me, far from being captivated with the poor girl, it was another I had in my mind when

my eyes looked upon her, and if I dwell upon the circumstance, it is because this same girl subsequently rendered me a service which, as you will hereafter see, I could ask of her without infringing on my principles.

At the end of two months, which were for me two centuries, some time in September, I returned to La Morlière. My host, having been advised of my arrival, awaited me on the piazza to bid me welcome. Iolande was not there; but on raising my eyes, I saw the curtains of her room half open and close again suddenly. She was watching, and had concealed herself in order to see me when I arrived. When she appeared in the drawing-room at the dinner hour, she accosted me with an eager smile, like a friend whom we meet again after a long absence, and in the evening she resumed her old place by my side. My two months of exile were already effaced from my memory and from my life—they had not even existed; for me, the spring, which had just passed, yet lasted!

My room was the same which I had previously occupied. Only, this time, a friendly hand seemed to have presided over its arrangement. Some pieces

of furniture had been replaced by others more elegant and more useful.

A thousand delicate attentions betrayed the presence and the taste of a woman. On a small table were two magnificent bouquets in crystal vases. Other flowers, of a fresh and exquisite perfume, were placed on the mantel. Every day during my absence these flowers were renewed, and I admired the vigilant affection which I had inspired without intending it in the old servant who was especially charged with the care of my room.

Several days passed without being marked by any new incident. My hosts showed themselves more and more affectionate towards me, while I myself felt more and more confused in their presence. As to their daughter, by turns smiling or thoughtful, she astonished me by the sudden changes in her manner. At times her sad eyes would fix themselves on me with an indefinable expression of impatience and melancholy. To continue much longer between us this state of constraint was to perpetuate an uncertainty which would end by degenerating into a veritable suffering. Every moment the decisive word would mount to my lips; but, restrained by timidity, by the respect, by the violence even of my

love, I dared not. I wanted to confide my secret to Monsieur de Brugal, who seemed to encourage me to do so by his indefatigable kindness, but the courage always failed me.

One day an accident happened to my gun which brought me back from the hunt an hour before the accustomed time. On entering my room, after closing the door, which, to my great surprise, I found half open, I heard a slight noise in the apartment. The curtains were lowered, and my eyes, coming all of a sudden from the brightest daylight to this semi-obscurity, were unable to distinguish anything. After a few moments, becoming accustomed to the darkness, I perceived Mademoiselle de Brugal standing before the mantelpiece, blushing, and holding in her hand two large bouquets. So, then, it was she—why could my heart not have divined it?—it was she who replaced each morning the flowers of the previous day; it was to her I was indebted for those amiable attentions which had so much charmed me. Speechless and confused on seeing me, she endeavored to speak, but her voice died upon her lips. I was as much affected as she, and could not find a word to say. Finally with a supreme effort over myself,

I approached and extended to her my hand. Tremblingly she gave me hers, and we remained thus a moment, our eyes lowered, without daring to speak or to look each other in the face. Overcome and utterly forgetting myself, I had passed gently, without thinking, my other arm around her waist, and drawing her toward me, I pressed her to my heart. Pale and motionless, she allowed herself to remain in my arms; without voice, without strength, she leaned on me with all the charming weight of her lovely form. I heard under her light muslin waist the palpitations of her heart, which beat against my own with hurried throbs. Silence and obscurity enveloped us; we were no longer of this world.

"Oh! how I love you," I breathed, with a stifled voice, to which, like a dying echo, her own responded.

And her mouth in exchanging this avowal met my lips.

Suddenly snatched from this dream, however, by the very intensity of my emotion, and coming back to a sense of reality, I remembered the Count de Brugal's kindness to me, his affectionate hospitality and confidence. Falling at the feet of Iolande:

"My soul is yours," I said in a firm voice; "and

with your family rests henceforth the happiness or despair of my life."

"You will be my husband," she replied with firmness; "no other shall ever obtain my hand; I swear it."

After a last embrace, calm this time, chaste, exchanged with assurance, she went away, her head erect, her mouth smiling, and I followed her with my eyes—light-hearted, as after some peril skilfully avoided, and with an easy conscience, as after a good action well accomplished.

From that evening even a casual observer might have read in our faces the change which had come over our hearts. Our eyes no longer feared to meet, nor had we any longer to resort to glances caught stealthily in order to read each other's thoughts.

Our habitual uneasiness had given place to an open and sweet security, which was revealed in our language and attitude; every smile was like a new promise; every look like a new vow; and when at the hour for tea we found ourselves seated side by side, our hands avoided each other's no more, but, on the contrary, sought the contact, and remained clasped for a moment with a mute and tender pressure.

This sweet dream was prolonged for several days, and still the certainty of this reciprocity, so long waited for, did not embolden me to speak to Monsieur de Brugal of my love for his daughter and of our exchanged vows. Meanwhile it seemed to me impossible for him not to divine the truth, so little we sought to make a mystery of it. On several occasions it even appeared to me that the countess and himself, far from placing obstacles in the way of our love, secretly encouraged it. Was it to be presumed besides that this family, so proud, so worthy of respect, so scrupulous about everything which touched the honor of their children, would have kept me so long in their midst, thus exposing us, Iolande and me, to the natural consequence of a growing sympathy, if, beforehand, they had not decided to repair the injury occasioned by such an imprudent trust and allow us to marry? I, therefore, summoned up all my courage to venture, as bravely as possible, on this important mission, when an unforeseen event occurred which upset, or at least adjourned, my project.

VI.

You are of course aware that after the arrest of the Duchess of Berri a virulent controversy sprang up between the revolutionary papers and those of the royalist party. We greedily devoured at La Morlière all the papers of the day. Monsieur de Brugal was stupefied at this exhibition of passionate hatred; I was exasperated on my side at these evidences of violence, unworthy of the French character, and it is needless for me to say that Mademoiselle de Brugal shared my indignation.

"The cowards!" she muttered one day, before me, at the reading of an article in which the grossest outrages were lavished upon the unfortunate princess, heroic victim of maternal devotion. "They have found the means of dishonoring themselves twice in one stroke, by insulting at the same time a subjugated foe and a woman."

The next day I left for Paris. Instantly on my arrival I hastened to the office of the *Quotidienne*, there to inscribe myself as ready to answer the well-known collective challenge that certain papers had

just addressed to the young men of the royalist party. Twenty-four hours after, I was informed that my adversary was found, and, accompanied by two seconds, I repaired to the appointed place.

I there encountered an officer on half-pay who had been decorated during the empire—one of those warriors with cropped hair and cropped mustache, both as bristling as their patriotism, who from 1815 to 1851 have noisily proclaimed their republicanism or liberalism, under pretext that they had served under the emperor, and who, even now, are not well persuaded that the empire is by no means synonymous with republic and liberty.

After a courteous salute, as customary in duels where the honor of the two champions is not interested, and where they are not excited by personal hatred, our seconds crossed our swords, and the combat commenced.

After the third pass I fell, wounded by a fierce thrust within two inches of my heart.

At the sight of this, my adversary, who was not expecting so terrible a result, threw his sword away from him in anger, and ran towards me, pale and desperate. Swearing like a heathen, in a moment when I had need perhaps of a more Christian con-

solation, he expressed his remorse that he, an old soldier, should have exposed himself to kill a child. The vivacity with which he came towards me, a large tear that I saw roll down his face, as well as the emotion which caused his voice to tremble, betrayed a sorrow so sincere, that in spite of my weakness, I extended my hand to him. When the surgeon, after first probing the wound, pronounced my life in no danger, my seconds decided, under his guidance and with the greatest precaution, to carry me back to my residence, where I found Captain Edouard Auger—this was the name of my disconsolate opponent—who, hastily preceding us, had already placed at my bedside a sister of charity. Furious against himself, he paced up and down the room with long strides, at the risk of communicating to me his feverish agitation, scolding loudly, buttoning and unbuttoning his coat with a nervous hand, in short, swearing, with a military energy, at the foolish exaltation of an age, in which two men of honor, two compatriots worthy of mutual esteem, and who had never done each other any harm, could fight thus in cold blood, under an artificial excitement induced by the passions of the moment.

As for myself, weak, oppressed, and half dying, I

gathered up what strength remained to me, and implored my seconds to inform my friend and protector, the Count de Brugal. A moment after I lost consciousness, became delirious, and remained so for several days. When I recovered my mind the count was at my bedside. He insisted upon my being removed to the country, where the pure and vivifying air would, according to his views, hasten my cure. I consented to it with pleasure, and my convalescence from that moment forward made rapid progress; but, alas! if my wound became better, I felt from day to day my heart grow more sick.

You can well understand that this duel and its consequences had for result to exalt the love of Iolande. And yet it was that duel which, from a sense of delicacy easy to be understood, prevented my lips from uttering the long-intended avowal. I disliked to appear to speculate upon the increased sympathy which my perilous devotion to the cause we both served must have inspired in my protector. Meanwhile the more I reflected, the more a refusal of the count seemed impossible to me. He had spoken so many times of his liberalism; he had so often expressed the desire to have the occasion

given him to openly manifest it, that I never for a moment doubted but that, in his eyes, nobleness of heart was perfectly the equal of nobleness of blood. The disinterestedness, worthy of another age, with which my father had offered to him his fortune, when he thought he was ruined, was it not, moreover, the best recommendation for my love? And then, would not the slender means of Monsieur de Brugal prevent him from giving a suitable marriage portion to his daughter? Of the ten thousand francs of income that he possessed, all the disposable part must, according to the custom of aristocratic families, go to the oldest son who was to inherit his title. Under these circumstances, the count could hardly hope for a brilliant marriage for Iolande, in a society above all where ease, love of pleasure and luxury, and the importance of perpetuating the brilliancy of the race, imposes upon most young people the sad obligation of making all questions of marriage subordinate to the question of money. My present fortune and that which must one day come to me, presented, on the contrary, quite a respectable amount. In short, the love of Iolande, without speaking of the congeniality of our tastes, sentiments, and opinions, which so closely at-

tached me to her family, was a reason which, joined to the others, seemed to me conclusive.

In spite of all these reasons for hope, I bent under the weight of I know not what vague inquietude, and my arguments were unable to triumph over my apprehensions. I finally decided that the courage which I should require for a verbal demand would always fail me. I, therefore, resolved to return to Paris, in the hope that my pen would prove more valiant than my tongue; and from there I addressed to Monsieur de Brugal the following letter, written with a trembling hand, and which I ran to throw in the post with all the excited precipitation of a mischievous child who is frightened at his own audacity.

"MONSIEUR LE COMTE: A man of honor may only cross the threshold of a house like yours, with a free conscience and without after thought. My delicacy forbids that I should any longer accept, without first informing you of my sentiments, a hospitality which is dear to me, but where I bring no longer a free heart, nor a mind, perhaps, entirely clear. I love your daughter, sir. I beg of you to excuse the avowal which I venture to make, but your kindness and affection alone have inspired me with the courage. Should this displease you, I am sure you will at least appreciate the sentiment which has called it forth. Believe, sir, etc., etc." . . . .

The following day I received the reply:

"SIR," said the countess, who had taken upon herself to answer in the name of her husband, "parents are always flattered with sentiments such as those you express for our dear Iolande; but we should eternally regret having given birth to them by any imprudence, if we were not well convinced that nothing on our part could have encouraged them. We have received you with cordiality, not thinking that you would see in our attentions anything further than the desire to oblige, as much as was in our power, the son of one of our best friends.

"Since long we have contemplated for Iolande a project that her age alone prevents us from realizing.

"Always count on our sincere and unalterable friendship. Meanwhile the confidence with which you have intrusted us, and which we were so far from expecting, imposes upon us the duty of a more circumspect attitude. We will continue, I hope, to see you in Paris as in the past, for a sudden rupture would give place to suppositions; but it would be difficult for us—and we deeply regret it, as you well know how highly we prize our friendly relations—it would be difficult for us to receive you in the country on the same footing as before. Yourself, in the present condition of your heart, could you come back here with pleasure? Believe, etc."

I remained stupefied. So then all was over! That love which had come upon me, so to speak, in spite of myself, was going to prove the torment of my life. And yet, what could be the motive for such a decided refusal? My fortune? It was ten times greater than that of Iolande. My character? Twenty times over the count and his wife had expressed the sympathy with which it inspired them. My conduct? The most rigorous

critic could not have found the least peccadillo to take hold of. Was it then my name? . . . .

Thus I was brutally rejected by the Count de Brugal; I, the son of a man who in his friendship for him had sacrificed his very fortune; I, who in my devotion to him had espoused his ideas to the extent of braving death for them, I was rejected for this only reason that my blood did not seem to him as noble as his own. And that cruel termination of non-acceptance was dealt out to me by a man who draped himself every moment in his liberalism. What, then, was this class of people whose political interests I had defended at the price of my blood and my future, and whose social prejudices held out against the lesson of three revolutions?

"Is it, then, true," I asked myself, swallowing my tears, "that certain tenacious vanities divide humanity in two distinct races, as impossible to commingle in society as the inhabitants of air and water in nature?" . . . .

My imagination, spurred on by my feelings, became wild. To my mind that refusal was an insult not only to myself, but to all those who, like me, equal or superior to the Count de Brugal and his peers by education or fortune, had only the misfor-

tune not to bear a name preceded, like his, by a nobiliary particle or a mercenary title. The reception given me by that family aggravated still more the insult. To allow me to live during three entire months, tête-à-tête as it were, with a young girl whose hand they had resolved in advance to refuse me, was it not giving me to understand that the same blood did not flow through our veins, and that between a man of my species and a young girl of the race of Iolande there was no reciprocal affection to guard against, nor any more affinity to be feared than between two beings belonging to classes the most diverse in creation?

True love has a vivacious hope; it is not easily repulsed, and willingly repays itself with illusions when reality escapes from its grasp. Mine in its wreck clung to every straw, and in the strength of my despair I inwardly nursed, without daring to avow it to myself, a last hope. Had Mademoiselle de Brugal been consulted, and had they disposed of her future, with her will, or without her consent? These old parents, when they are once stung by ambition, by avarice, by that venomous tarantula, vanity, they are terrible! My love for Iolande was too loyal to doubt hers or her devotion. It was not possible,

after vows such as she had made, that she would ever consent to sanction this refusal. What was my name to her, if she was only sure of my heart? What would she care for the sneers of the world and the threats of her family? Thank God! my fortune was sufficient for us both. . . . And my heart galloped, galloped, while my head followed suit, so that the next day, when the servant opened my door and announced the Count de Brugal, I ran joyfully to meet him, fully persuaded that he came to disavow the letter of the previous day.

VII.

The count entered my room in a gay and unconcerned manner, and holding out his hand to me with a charming cordiality, and with as much ease as if nothing of any importance had passed between us:

"My dear Maurice," he said, cheerfully, installing himself without ceremony in an easy-chair, "this visit, after the letter you have received, must astonish you. The truth is, if it had been any one else, we would have stopped there, but with such a friendship as we feel for you, we could not be satisfied with the commonplace form of a simple letter."

I breathed. Were my presentiments then to be realized?

"Well, my friend," continued the count, with the same amiable familiarity, "what curious fancy has all of a sudden taken possession of you, and who in the name of goodness would have thought that you, so sensible, so judicious, could one day have thrown us into such a cruel embarrassment. For, in short, make yourself a judge of the situation; your charac-

ter is perfect, your merit incontestable, you are sure of a brilliant future." . . .

"What is he coming at?" I thought to myself.

"We profess the same principles, we share the same sentiments, your disinterested devotion to the good cause is the object of our admiration. You have my entire esteem, ... but you cannot have my daughter."

At this conclusion, which I so little expected from what had preceded, I remained thunderstruck.

"God knows," continued Monsieur de Brugal, "if I share the prejudices of my class. My friends call me a Jacobin. Titles, coats of arms, ah! well, yes, I don't care a straw for all these outward nothings. But let there come an occasion to prove my liberalism, and then they will see." . . .

"You have told me that before," I stammered with emotion. "That is why I hoped."

"You hoped . . . to enter into my family? What in the world is there in common, I beg of you, between my liberalism and my family? Liberalism, my young friend, is a sentiment exclusively political and patriotic, and which has nothing to do whatever with little personal or domestic interests. You know the anecdote of Mirabeau, who, as a true marquis of the

good olden time, gave a smart kick to his valet de chambre who one day omitted to call him by his title. Although he was a democrat when in the national assembly, at home he remained the nobleman. Where is the prince or the high-titled personage, expressing republican sentiments, whom you have ever seen put into practice, in his family or in his palace, his theories of equality. The truth is that a nobleman, even should he set forth the most democratic opinions, will always remain at heart a nobleman. He is chained by a thousand ties which he cannot break without suffering in his pride or in his vanity, and, above all, not without peril for the happiness of his children. Fancy our Iolande, whose trousseau is marked with my coat of arms, who has eaten all her life from silver engraved with my coat of arms, who in the time of my splendor rode in my carriage which bore my coat of arms, now obliged to mark her linen with the prosaic initials 'M. V.'! Think of her in the midst of the old friends of her childhood, all decorated with high-sounding titles, all duchesses, princesses, countesses, and obliged to repeat two or three times her name to their astonished valets, and hear them announce in a bewildered voice, 'Madame Vernier'!"

"If she loves me, if I render her happy, of what consequence?"

"Yes, that is the old song. I have heard that tune before. Well, admitting that you are loved. Be it so: your love will take the place of everything; you will make a world for yourselves; you will not notice the imperceptible smiles with which you will be received in society, or rather you will keep away from that society which is so disdainful and so disdained by you. I will admit even, if you please, that you could be loved a long time. My esteem for you cannot go, however, my dear friend, to admitting that you will be loved forever. A woman does not love her husband all her life; that is not customary, my goodness! at least not with us. What then? Thrown back upon yourself, you will suffer a thousand stings with which the epigrams of the salons will cause your very epiderme to bleed; you will suffer from that condition of inferiority to which your wife will have resigned herself on your account, in the very society where she was destined to occupy the most exalted position; in short, you will suffer from all those intangible affronts which you will be compelled to submit to, without being able to avenge yourself, any better than a poet or a public man can do when

assailed by the scurrilous articles of a penny newspaper."

"So, then," I exclaimed, "you will sacrifice, you who pretend to be so liberal, to prejudices of which you acknowledge yourself the injustice, the happiness of a friend, the happiness of a child!"

"My dear Maurice," vivaciously replied the count, who understood by my emotion that the moment had come to speak seriously, "be assured that we are not those barbarous parents, such as you read of in novels, ready to sacrifice, as you say, the happiness of their children to some frivolous motives of vanity. Believe also that we feel for you a sincere friendship. If, then, your mutual attachment is as strong as you seem to think it is, if it triumphs over the reflections which I have urged my daughter to make, and which I pray you to make in your turn, well then, we will have fulfilled our duty to the end, and shall feel obliged to conform to your wishes."

"What!" I exclaimed with anxiety, "she knows, then?"

"She knows all. Was it not our first duty to show her your letter? We would think ourselves unworthy the name of honest people, if we had attempted to deceive her by preventing her from see

ing you without first explaining our motives for doing so. Besides, prudence even obliged us to be loyal to you both. Sooner or later, on meeting, an explanation between you might have brought about most deplorable consequences. I have not left her, therefore, in any way ignorant of your sentiments. Only, all the obstacles which seemed to militate against your marriage have been scrupulously analyzed by us in her presence, and we have endeavored to convince her, though with some difficulty, I admit, of the impossibility of such a union; nor is this all, and I will make to you no secret of my projects, for I intend to act toward you as frankly as toward her. We shall seek to divert her by all the means that lie in our power. We shall present her in society, and that the most brilliant, the most titled, in order to induce her to seek there, without finding it of course, the place which she would occupy as simple Madame Vernier. If that means proves insufficient, then we will have recourse to the great remedy, travelling and absence. Be good enough from your side to look within yourself; calmly consider the matter, look well at society, study its forms and its laws, and, in a year from now I promise you to submit to the wishes of

my daughter and your own. I speak to you, you observe, in a manner as one man should speak to another whom he esteems and loves. I now prove to you my loyalty; it is needless to say that I trust to yours. But, in order to make the test decisive, it must be complete and sincere."

I promised the count that he would be satisfied with my discretion and reserve, and that he should never feel annoyed by meeting me too often in the salons where he might escort his daughter, neither by any attempt at a clandestine meeting, or secret correspondence. He left. The idea of this trial of one year inspired me, however, with as much apprehension as grief. I was always sure of my love; but, alas! I already began to feel less sure of Iolande's.

Whatever might happen, and even though her heart should remain true to me, I could not disguise the fact that my marriage with her would only be a happy exception to the rule, without invalidating the general opinion, which is opposed to marriages of this nature. It seemed to me at that instant a thick veil had fallen from my eyes. Thrown all of a sudden from the sphere of political abstractions, in which until then my royalism had been hovering, down into the world of realities, I

commenced to understand that our struggles in life arise, not so much from intangible principles as from men whose interests or passions may be opposed or subservient to ours, and that politics, which are based solely upon abstractions, are only fit for dreamers and Utopians. Under the impression of my own sufferings, the great problem of the antagonism of the different classes of society stood more than ever fatally before my mind, and the social question seemed to me of far greater importance to humanity than the political one. These considerations, which were suggested by my position toward the Count de Brugal, led me to reflect upon the causes of all our past revolutions, and to see in the last one, which until then I had so cordially detested, only the legitimate outbreak of the indignation of the offended masses.

"Oh! oh!" I exclaimed, with a hearty laugh, "I did not expect to see the revolution of July in this affair."

"You may laugh, as much as you please," replied the monk gayly. "Do you believe that I can speak of those curious love scenes and those fits of comical anger to-day without laughing at them myself? It is necessary, however, since you wish to hear the re-

cital of my life, that I narrate to you the successive transformations which my ideas have undergone and the secret motive of all these transformations. And then, shall I avow it to you? It seems to me that it will not be impossible to perceive some vague analogy between the personal sentiments, which have detached me from the royalist party, and the popular sentiments which have hastened its fall. Has not France, like me, shown herself, at first, sincerely devoted to the monarchy? Like me, has she not gradually left it, from antipathy for the prejudices of the class of people who for fifteen years have set themselves up as the true expression of the royalist idea, rather than from an aversion to royalty itself? However that may be, I felt myself every day more powerfully drawn away from my party into the class to which I really belonged. The involuntary and rapid change which came over my opinions astonished me, and I could no longer think of my recent duel without a smile. What had become of my adversary? I had not seen him for a long time, and I felt that, in the present state of my mind, I should, without doubt, experience a piquant pleasure in conversing with him. I owed him, besides, a visit for the cares he had lavished on

me during my convalescence and for the numerous calls he had made me during that period, and which I had neglected to return, absorbed as I was by the preoccupations of love.

VIII.

Captain Auger lodged in a little room in the rue Papillon, furnished like all furnished rooms, that is to say, not furnished at all. The walls were covered with a red-figured paper, red worsted curtains hung from the windows, four easy chairs covered with the same material, and a round table, covered with a red woollen cloth. I say red, because I suppose it must have been, but as to the real shade of it now, it would be difficult to tell. His cross and his sword, suspended on one side of the chimney, formed a match to a gilt frame on the other side, exhibiting his military records, and to a lithograph similarly framed which represented Bonaparte as first consul. Numerous engravings ornamented the walls. They were: "The Farewell of Fontainebleau," "The Trumpeter's Horse," "The Apotheosis of the Emperor," "The Taking of the Bastille," "The Death of Poniatowski," all the dilapidated relics of fifteen years of liberalism. His library was an étagère of varnished wood, containing a few books. The "Speeches of General Foy," the "Mémorial de

Sainte-Hélène," two or three incomplete volumes of Pigault-Lebrun, "The Soldier's Manual," "The Songs of Béranger," such was, as far as I can remember, his literary store. Captain Auger appeared to live in a condition in which nothing was brilliant but the gilt frames of his patriotic engravings.

He received me with every demonstration of the warmest friendship. Nevertheless I saw very soon that I had surprised him in one of those moments of ill-humor necessarily frequent with a man whose character has been soured by those wants of comfort and ease consequent upon a broken career. So I prepared to leave, excusing myself in the best manner possible for my inopportune visit.

"No, no," he said, detaining me, "do not leave, I beg of you. I experience a great pleasure in seeing you and thank you for a visit which proves that you do not hold our late encounter against me."

"We were fools, both of us," I replied with vivacity. "Was it necessary to cut each other's throat in a dark wood because we did not belong to the same party?"

"Your party is a good deal better than mine," grumbled the officer on half-pay, under his thick

mustache; "it possesses at least some grandeur, a certain chivalrous devotion, some nobility, anyhow! . . . . Between soldier and nobleman it is easy to understand each other; they can fight, if they have misunderstandings; but between an officer and a green-grocer, pshaw! No sympathy possible; not even the slightest duel to propose. The truth is, we do not speak the same language."

"Would you prefer, then," I exclaimed, with stupefaction, to the honest, laborious, economical bourgeoisie, "this crowd of proud idlers who people drawing-rooms and clubs?"

"Fine people, your bourgeoisie, . . . militia!"

"Was it not to insure their triumph that you fought in July?"

"I am an old soldier of the emperor; I fought for liberty, that is all."

"I did not expect, I must confess, to find on your lips just now this expression of sympathy for the impertinent coterie who pretend to represent royalism in France.'

"Nor did I expect to find in you so much good feeling for this heap of babblers, scribblers, and shopkeepers, who pretend to represent liberalism in this country."

"This bourgeoisie that you calumniate is, however, France itself."

"No; such a state of things cannot last long"—and the voice of the captain became animated and his eye sparkled with anger—"any cotton-dealer or pettifogger has more influence to-day than an old soldier of Marengo or Austerlitz. They get all the honors, all the offices; they are the power. And I, in spite of my twenty campaigns, in spite of my ten wounds, after having spent my life in killing off Austrians, Spaniards, Russians, I am refused the miserable little office of inspector in a charitable institution. You must see that justice is violated, that even good sense is violated. Charles X., at least, only violated the charter! They despise the grand army; 'the old guard is dying,' why! it is dead already; it expired under the sword of the shopkeepers!" . . . .

"Oh, oh!" I exclaimed, laughing, "do not take fire so quickly, and after coming well nigh killing each other for the glory of the party that we defended yesterday, let us not draw swords to-day for the opposite side."

Such was my first lesson of political scepticism.

IX.

The term of probation assigned me by the count had nearly expired, and my heart beat with anxiety in view of the coming solution. My anger against the offensive vanities which were the obstacles to my love had not gone so far as to prevail. My heart made a clear distinction between its interests and a wounded pride, and while I retained in the depths of my soul a keen resentment for the refusal of the count, and above all for the motives of that refusal, I did not feel disposed to sacrifice my happiness to my rancor. The two passions which for the moment had possession of my heart had moreover nothing in common. The animosities of family or religion, of nation or of caste, will never prevent a Romeo from sighing under the balcony of a Juliet.

For a year I had broken off all intimacy with the family who were to decide the question of my life. Once or twice only I had met the count and his wife, and no allusion on their part had given me any reason to hope. To tell the truth, their recep

tion, always kind and courteous, had offered also nothing absolutely discouraging to my love. As to Mademoiselle de Brugal, I had made it a point to avoid any place where I thought there might be a possibility of meeting her. My offended self-love found its revenge in this irreproachable discretion, which proved to the Brugals that it is not the name alone which makes the true nobleman, but that the heart is better than titles, and that one can possess all the qualities of the highest peer of the realm without proclaiming those qualities or making any display of them.

One evening I was seated at a whist table, in a house where they knew my former relations with the family of Iolande, without suspecting what had lately occurred between us. All of a sudden, between two rubbers, my partner flatly addressed me the following question:

"By the way, can you, my dear Vernier, who are one of the best friends of the Count de Brugal, can you give us the correct information in regard to the great news?"

"News?"

"Why! don't you know? The marriage of his daughter."

I turned pale! Meanwhile, by a prodigious effort over myself, I managed to suppress my emotion.

"With whom," I asked, in a firm voice.

"With the prefect of the Hautes-Alpes, the Marquis de Mauvezin."

I could not reply.

"How can that be possible?" exclaimed one; "the marquis is thirty years older than she."

"And then," added another, "would the count, who is so ardent a royalist, give his daughter to a man whose recent defection has caused so much scandal?"

"The fact is nevertheless official," added a third. "I met Brugal, offered him my congratulations, and he accepted them."

I finished my game and won without making a mistake. My ears tingled as if I had been under the great bell of Notre Dame on an Easter Sunday; the blood mounted to my temples, emotion strangled me; I was suffocated. Meanwhile, to avoid suspicion, I proposed to my adversaries another game, which I won also. You know the proverb: "Happy at play." . . .

The moment to leave came at last; I longed to

breathe the air. I directed my steps towards the Boulevard Italien. It was the evening of a masked ball, and the night was magnificent. A joyous animation reigned through the finest quarter of Paris. You know with what violence the Parisian population, during the first years which followed the revolution, threw themselves into wild pleasures. It was the great epoch of those balls of Musard and the Variétiés, of those revels and cavalcades, which we still remember after thirty years, as a far-off echo of music, noise, and splendor. When I arrived on the boulevard, it was thronged with an animated crowd. The carriages, arriving in file, stopped before the entrance, and poured into the hall their flood of dominos. In the midst of this excitement, which I did not even notice, so great was my own, I walked alone, slackening and quickening my steps by turns, under the spur of my sufferings, and feverishly absorbed in my own reflections.

I had met the Marquis de Mauvezin several times in society. He was a man of about fifty years of age, or he might be even more, who, during a long life of pleasure, had dissipated a large fortune in vulgar follies—gambling, women, and horses. The day had finally come when his agent was obliged to

inform him that his hundred thousand francs of income were reduced to only three hundred thousand francs of capital. Finding it impossible to remain longer a frivolous man, he determined to become a serious one. Some friends had proposed to solicit for him an office which the government would, without doubt, feel flattered to bestow upon a personage of his rank. Where is the democratic government that does not like to come in contact, if ever so little, with the nobility? . . . . Very soon, by the desire of the king, the Minister of the Interior had appointed the Marquis de Mauvezin to the prefecture of the Hautes-Alpes, which the latter accepted, in the hope of a rapid and brilliant promotion, and without deigning to listen to the curses, sarcasms, and derogatory remarks which the Count de Brugal, more than all others, lavished upon him.

Once exiled in his new Eden, the marquis felt it incumbent upon him to place there an Eve. Delicate and difficult problem. Tall, withered, with a slight stoop, his whole person betrayed a precocious old age, consequence of a life of pleasures. His hair was nearly gone, and his leaden complexion indicated the condition of a blood impoverished by violent medical treatment. While losing his for-

tune, it was easy to see that he had also ruined his health. In short, he was the embodiment of Parisian dissipation. Meanwhile the fortune which yet remained to him, the office he then held while waiting for a more brilliant one, and lastly, his title, made him, under the present conditions of marriage, a husband quite presentable. If he could not expect to find a wife with a large fortune, he might, at least, find a young girl worthy of him by birth, and who would be charmed to increase her income five or six fold with that of her husband. Mademoiselle de Brugal, beautiful, noble, but poor, seemed to be in all these particulars the one best suited. Some mutual friends interested themselves. They set forth to the prefect the advantage of an alliance which would serve as a pledge of reconciliation with his old friends, and in some respects justify his conduct. On the other side they made to glitter before the eyes of the young girl the embroidered coat, the fifteen thousand francs of income, and the title of marchioness, and in that way the marriage had been brought about.

"So, then," said I to myself, winding my way in despair along the boulevard crowded with masks, through the noise of carriages, the laughter of the

strollers, and the calls of the coachmen; "so, then, the count refuses me his daughter, me whom he esteems, and gives her to a man for whom he has publicly expressed his contempt. And the world, who would have received, perhaps, with amazement the announcement of my marriage with Mademoiselle de Brugal, will find it quite natural for her to espouse the Marquis de Mauvezin, grown old by debauch more than by age, and whose mercenary apostasy it had once stigmatized as an outrageous scandal! What do I say? She herself has forgotten me. In less than a year, the repeated counsels of her family and their perfidious insinuations have awakened in that young heart the love of luxury, pride, coquetry, and the thousand little feminine passions, and have drowned her nobler instincts. Ah! how great is the distance that separates the young girl who only yet listens to the voice of her heart, from the one who has allowed herself to be drawn into the wretched vanities of this world, and how society warps our souls!"

All these ideas fermented in my heart, and deposited there less of grief than contempt. My education was being made.

After one or two hours recklessly walking on the

boulevard, I mechanically entered the opera. I had only gone a few steps in the passage-way, when I was approached by two dominos whom I at once recognized. They were Madame Dumont and her daughter. I accompanied them to their box, where Cora, suffocated by the heat, took off her mask. I could not help exclaiming, so much was I struck at that moment by her resemblance to Iolande. They noticed my emotion; but taking entirely to themselves my eager civilities and my excitement, of which they were unable to divine the true cause, they accepted me as their cavalier during the ball. After supper I escorted them home. I called several times in the course of the following days. I found, I know not what soured pleasure in that resemblance, and while comparing Iolande and Cora, I asked myself whether I had the right, after what had happened, to give a higher rank in my esteem to the young girl well-born, religiously brought up, who could thus sell coldly to a man whom she did not love, a heart she had already pledged to another, than I should to the unfortunate child whom a deplorable education, joined to poverty and corruption, had condemned to inevitable misery.

X.

One morning, while alone in my room, my door opened, and the Count de Brugal, whom I had met two or three times at the utmost during the past year, appeared before me.

"My very dear sir," he said, offering me his hand, with the affectionate smile and amiable ease which never forsook him, "I came to express to you in person the gratification that your conduct has afforded us. Upon my word, you have shown yourself a man—and a thorough man. Accept my compliments."

I bowed without replying.

"You know all, I suppose?" he remarked, without even appearing to notice my confusion. "Ah! that dear child, how she has suffered—she has greatly suffered—as you have, without doubt; but, finally, thank Heaven, she is consoled—as you are, are you not? Is not life one constant scene of suffering and mutual consolation? And I have now to inform you that the marriage will be celebrated next Thursday."

"I knew it, sir," I replied without affectation; "and I congratulate you on having found a son-in-law worthy of you."

"He is perfect," exclaimed the count, "and in every respect just the husband to suit my daughter —elegant, talented, fond of pleasure, of luxury, horses, really quite of our world. At first she detested him, but in the end she will adore him. I know that some puritans reproach the marquis for the office he has accepted under the present government; but what of it? And, besides, his private fortune had suffered. Now, if we cannot find words enough of contempt for those kind of desertions, which arise from an ignoble want of political conviction, we must only look with indulgence on some exceptional cases where members of the nobility are, so to say, compelled ostensibly to leave our cause, in order to rebuild their fortunes and to find the means to keep up proper appearances."

I replied by some short, vague words, avoiding with great care any appearance of recrimination unworthy of me. The count also informed me that immediately after the ceremony the newly-married pair would leave for Fontainebleau, where they intended to pass, in the harmonious silence of the

forest, the first days of their honeymoon. Then he left, swearing anew, by all the Olympian gods and Paradise, that he was the most liberal democrat in France and my best friend.

My course was decided upon.

I hastened to Madame Dumont, whom, to my great joy, I found alone in the back shop. The presence of Cora might have made it difficult to manage the affair which brought me there, and perhaps have spoiled my plans, because the conversation that I wished to have with her mother, and of which the foolish old glove woman was incapable of feeling the impertinence, might have profoundly humiliated the poor child, and it was that which, at any price, I most wanted to avoid. Excuse me, sir, if I do not narrate that scene—insulting parody on Mademoiselle de Brugal—nor the debates which precede most marriages, and which had certainly preceded hers. If you have ever witnessed, moreover, any matrimonial negotiations; if you have ever heard the bargaining for the marriage portion, the calculations as to the required number of handkerchiefs, stockings, and linen, the speculations without end on the chances of life or death of the grandparents, nay even of the parties themselves; if you have seen a marriage

nearly broken off, or entirely so, because the bride, the tender bride, demands an addition of ten thousand francs more to the dowry, or because the family of the bride, of the chaste bride, demands that the adversary—yes, it is really that; I insist upon the word—that the adversary allow four or five thousand francs more for the trousseau of his wife; if you have witnessed those subtle usurers' rapacities, those old Jew villanies, those lawyers' tricks, which constitute what was formerly called the sacrament of marriage, the gala-day of youth, and what is called to-day the great business of life, you can form to yourself an idea of the sad comedy that I took pleasure in playing before Madame Dumont, in order to secure the services of her daughter for a scheme of vengeance which I had planned. During these ridiculous negotiations I fancied to myself the parents of Iolande discussing with the future husband the contract for their daughter in the same terms, and I said to myself: "After all, can a woman be won otherwise nowadays, and is it not always the same old story? Was not Mademoiselle de Brugal handed over by her noble family to the Marquis de Mauvezin, very much in the same way as Cora was intrusted to me by her foolish old

mother? Only Cora was hired to assist me in my scheme, while the other. . . ."

In this comedy my spite found a bitter pleasure; I plunged with delight into this soured vengeance. The woman who had betrayed me without any reason, by her lightness and her vanity, I felt I had the right to despise, and that right I exercised with a sort of rage. It seemed to me that this mental assimilation between Iolande and Cora, and the moral superiority which I credited to the latter, expressed exactly the feelings of contempt which I now experienced for the one who, but so recently, had all my love, all my respect.

Once assured of the consent of Cora, I informed her that we were to leave the next day for Fontainebleau. It was the very day that the Marquis and Marchioness de Mauvezin had announced that, after coming from the church, they were to leave for the same town.

On arriving, I ascertained the hotel where the newly-married couple were stopping. They showed me the windows of their rooms. I chose mine exactly opposite, opening on the garden of the same house.

In the evening I could see a gentle light through

their blinds. On the white curtains two shadows were moving, coming and going from one room to the other, growing larger and smaller, disappearing and then returning again. At this sight I was seized with a burning fever, which I tried in vain to calm. At the thought that there, so near me, Iolande reposed in the arms of another, giving all her love to one whom she scarcely knew, . . . all that love which, in a moment of sincerity, she had bestowed upon me, and which I had respected, so much was her honor dearer to me than my love ;— at the thought that the remembrance of our virginal love, presenting itself suddenly to her mind, was profaned, perhaps, by the caresses which she was lavishing on her old husband, I choked with jealousy, grief, and anger. Strange nature ours! These foolish ideas tortured me, and held me nailed to the spot. I would have liked to burn the house where this infamous treason was perpetrated—that was the name I then gave to this meanest of feminine perfidies—and I could not take my eyes from the windows of that room where the last light had been extinguished, and which was now wrapped in the general darkness of the night.

I went out in the streets of Fontainebleau in order

to refresh my burning forehead by contact with the night air. In my insane wanderings I met several roundsmen. One of them stopped me, taking me for a lunatic, but allowed me to pass, on ascertaining that I was only love-cracked. Towards five o'clock in the morning I returned to the hotel.

After an hour or two of painful and agitated rest, I saw the window opposite to mine open wide, admitting the first rays of the morning sun. The marchioness—she was henceforth a marchioness—came and stood there alone, in a white wrapper and with uncovered head. Her face was as fresh as morning. With an indifferent eye, as calm as a lawyer after a trial or an actress after the play, she looked vaguely before her in the garden. In haste I sent for Cora, requesting her to make a similar toilet to that of the marchioness, and placing her before the window, I entwined my arm around the waist of the young girl, and pressed one of her hands in mine. The two women thus placed looked the image of each other. At this apparition Iolande appeared at first stupefied, and as if thunder-struck before this exact reproduction of herself; then a cloud passed over her face; I saw her turn pale, close the window with a feverish haste, and disappear.

She had seen me, and I was revenged! The same evening the marquis and his wife left the hotel, and I returned to Paris.

I need not say to you that my relations with Cora ended here. She would have brought to my mind remembrances too painful for me to continue the acquaintance. My costly vengeance once satisfied, I gave back the captive bird her liberty, and to Madame Dumont the right of continuing to extol before the elegant customers of her perfume shop the immaculate worth of her daughter. From that moment I lost sight of her, and what became of her afterwards I never knew.

"This is," said my host with simplicity, stopping his narrative, "the first chapter of my history. Is it not enough for to-day? Let us see what time it is."

The clock pointed at one in the morning.

"I do not wish, sir," I said, "to impose upon your kindness. But you must promise to give me the next chapter."

"Well, will you promise me in your turn to prolong your stay at Franquevaux?"

"With all my heart."

"Shall I tell you? Your presence here makes me

feel young again; and, thanks to you, I look back to the past, and contemplate once more the scenes of my youth. All the friends of my younger days reappear like shadows, which move in the distance on the other side of a broad river—the one, most likely, that the ancients called the river of oblivion. Where is the man who, on looking behind him, and in measuring the space gone over, does not ask himself the question, as I do, if life is not all a dream?"

Thereupon he touched his glass to mine after refilling it, lighted his candle, handed me one, and we prepared to retire.

"Gently," he said in a whisper, as in walking we made a little noise; "she sleeps! But, pshaw!" smiling with good humor, "she will forgive us."

XI.

The next day, when I found myself in the fields again, my gun on my shoulder, and in the company of the monk of Franquevaux, all he had told me on the previous night seemed like a dream, so little did this robust countryman, this hunter, with his sunburnt face and nimble step, running through the fallow ground, jumping ditches, and gathering up the wounded birds, resemble the elegant man of the world whom my host had portrayed to me. The commonplace hunt among the marshes and vines seemed to him not a sufficient inducement to detain me in his solitude; he wanted to initiate me into the less known and more exciting sports which belong exclusively to that locality. We accordingly started one afternoon for the arid plain of Crau. A party waited for us in one of those shady farms which are like an oasis in the Provençal desert. The arrival of our hunter was saluted by cries of welcome. He had written beforehand to the farmer, requesting him to get up, in my honor, a red-partridge hunt. Armed with a simple switch, and

mounted on horses as ardent as they were nimble, and which wander in troops in the solitude of the *Sauvage*, we pursued the frightened birds through this sea of sand and pebbles, at the utmost speed of our animals. It is easy to distinguish in the barren, open plain the cover of the partridge; all you have to do is to go straight at them. They take wing; you rush after them. In the midst of a cloud of dust they all pass by like a hurricane,—horses, dogs, and hunters. After being started three or four times in this way, the poor bird, exhausted, dragging its wings, hides under the tufts of grass, or crouches between two stones, and endeavors to avert by stratagem a peril from which it can no longer escape by flight. Then the horsemen run at full speed to the spot where it is concealed, and with the sole aid of their sticks and dogs catch them, without even getting off their horses. Preceded by some of the large greyhounds of the Camargue, we ran the hare also in the plain of Crau; but the hunt which has left on my mind the most brilliant recollection was that of the sea-duck, which I witnessed on the pond of Scamandre.

The day on which it is to take place is fixed in advance, and bills are posted in all the neighboring

towns to inform the public. At sunrise each of the boats which are moored at the shore takes in one or two men, armed with guns, besides the oarsman, who already occupies it. Soon, at a signal agreed upon, the flotilla starts. Arranged in semicircle and closing up at each new stroke of the oar, it glides silently over the water and aims for the centre of the pond, where may be seen grouped together the black mass of ducks. The attentive silence of the hunters, the order which is preserved in the general movements of the boats, the thought which involuntarily comes to one of the accidents which might arise from the least imprudence among this large number of armed men, the gentle motion of the waves which sparkle in the rising sun, interest you, in spite of yourself, in a scene which is full of grandeur and poetry. The birds thus surrounded by a fatal circle, which gradually closes in upon them, finally are obliged to resort to their wings for safety. With a noise like thunder, they all take flight at once, dispersing in every direction, and are compelled, in order to gain the land, to pass over the heads of the hunters. Suddenly a tumultuous noise succeeds the previous silence. It is a confused cry of men, barking of dogs, drowned in a fire of mus-

ketry as loud as that from a platoon of soldiers, as well kept up as a file fire, and which can be heard for ten miles around. The birds that have escaped the lead of the hunters in the boats meet on the shore another army, ten times more numerous, of green marksmen, of hardened poachers, of peasants too poor to pay their ten francs for a boat, who receive them in their turn with shot of every description, and for a moment the discharge from the shore responds like a loud echo to that from the pond. In an hour's time all is over; the destruction is complete. The few ducks that survive have taken refuge in the neighboring ponds. I do not know of any hunt more abundant or more expeditious. It often happens that the hunters divide among themselves twenty thousand of these birds killed in less than two hours.

The monk of Franquevaux gave me also the rare pleasure of a flamingo hunt on the Vaccarès. Thanks to him, I have been able to have a near view of these flocks of huge birds with their brilliant plumage and melancholy attitude, guarded in their distant ponds by four sentinels silently perched on one foot, who utter at the approach of the least danger the cry of alarm, and never quit

their place until the entire family are safe, and even allow themselves to be killed at their posts, like intrepid soldiers, in order to save the retreating army. Thanks to him, I have followed with a charmed eye the graceful undulations of this winged flock, balancing through the air like an immense white scarf embroidered with gold and pink silk floating in the wind, and I have had the good luck to shoot down some of these magnificent stilt-walkers, which until then I had never seen but in zoological gardens and in the glass cases of the museums of natural history.

In spite of the new distractions that my host constantly invented for me, my curiosity, awakened by the first chapter of his history, made me hold him to his promise, and each day I obtained from him, though not without difficulty, some additional pages of the romance of which I had heard but the commencement. Sometimes I listened to him, seated by his side under a tree, when the hunters took their noisy dinner; sometimes it was in a boat while tracing out a passage through the reeds of the marshes, or rowing light and free over the sleeping pond. These recitals, ten times interrupted, taken up, left off again to be taken up anew, I cannot pretend to give here in all their details. It

would be necessary to tell also the thousand circumstances, the halts, and the excursions after which they were made, and to describe even the picturesque landscape in which they were framed. My memory and my pen would prove unequal to the task. I will, therefore, ask of my reader to allow me simply to collect all that I remember, and offer it to him in my own name. The monk will take up his own story in good time. Meanwhile, if I dare to promise a faithful description, I cannot disguise the fact that the confidences of my host will lose a great deal of their most attractive character by passing through my mouth; for their charm for me arose especially from the contrast of these Parisian recitals, coming from the lips of this peasant of the lower Rhône.

XII.

Wounded in his pride, deceived in his affections, struck to the heart, the last we saw of Maurice he was burning the gods he had previously worshipped. The humiliating refusal he had received indicated a disdain which was not only limited to himself, but even embraced the entire class to which he belonged. The more his political faith had shown itself simple and disinterested, the more his heart bled at this first rough contact with social vanities. However, in spite of his anger, which he was the first himself to ridicule when he spoke of it twenty years after, he did not like at once publicly to break off with the past; not on account of any feeling of childish pride: a far nobler motive actuated him. Whoever changes his politics for other reasons than vulgar interest, becomes to the party he abandons what a child becomes to his family after leaving the parental roof. Even the conviction that he was on the wrong path does not extinguish in him all sympathy for the errors of his youth, and it is thus that we often find in the opinions of old people, though

many years have intervened, traces of their former predilections. In the midst of this grievous disorder of sentiments and ideas, some kind of distraction became necessary to Maurice's over-excited mind. Besides, his brilliant intellect could not remain inactive very long. If political discussions were for the moment impossible in the present uncertainty of his opinions, other labors at least were allowed him. What would prevent him from seeking in the calm and pure joys of philosophical studies and the excitement of literary struggles forgetfulness of his feverish preoccupations and his bitter deceptions? The enjoyments of the mind often console the sufferings of the heart. During his short career as a journalist he had come in contact with a great number of Parisian writers. His relations of good fellowship had opened to him all the doors of the republic of letters, and he could enter at his pleasure through history, romance, the drama, or criticism. If ultimate success depended on his talent, on his will alone depended the beginning.

It was especially towards the drama that Maurice felt inclined. It seemed to him that, if he were to find anywhere diversion and forgetfulness, it would be in this kind of occupation, which is a mixture of

pleasures, labors, and violent emotions, and which, from its vicissitudes, as well as from its actual aim, deserves indeed the name of "dramatic life." What man, besides, does not remember the impression produced on him at twenty years by the prestige of the theatre? The magnificence and illusion of the stage appointments, the intelligent combination of all the arts placed at the disposal of every kind of seduction, women in fanciful dresses, some really beautiful, others embellished by all the artifices of an alluring coquetry, the attraction of the dialogue, the interest of the plot, the apparent reality of the most chimerical fiction, the warm atmosphere of the hall, all conspire to stupefy the senses, to benumb reason, and to open to the charmed imagination an unknown world.

What attracted Maurice still more to the theatre was the glorious possibility of a sudden success. To arise in the morning lost and unknown in the crowd, and to retire at night, applauded, complimented, almost renowned; to reach in one day—what do I say?—in one hour, that notoriety which so many distinguished men have vainly pursued in other ways during a lifetime; to see one's self after a first work become the object of the praise, or at least of the

attention of the press; such was the perspective that charmed his young imagination. He entertained, moreover, a high idea of the mission of a dramatic author, who is in direct contact with the crowd, whom he delights, excites, alternately can make laugh or cry, and in whom he can stir at will every bad or noble passion; for he was persuaded that writers endowed with this magnificent privilege should understand its social importance, and not hesitate to sacrifice every interest—the interest even of their very fortune and popularity—to that of the public. Intelligent, with a fine mind, thoroughly versed in the study of the great masters, why should he not succeed as well as any other? In this desire for a sudden triumph the recollection of Iolande also entered somewhat into his thoughts, I suppose. Unfortunately during his former labors in the great literary world he had cultivated fewer relations with dramatic writers than any others. The only one in any way known to him was Vilfrid Daroux, who wrote for two small theatres, and whose name, from being placarded on all the walls and fences, had quite the appearance of being that of a renowned playwright.

Vilfrid Daroux was a merry companion, a good

liver, a gay beau and always ready for some sport, a real jolly fellow, who took nothing seriously, neither his profession, his talent, his person, nor any other person, and who would have put himself in his own vaudevilles if by doing so he could have obtained a satisfactory copyright. He excelled especially in stanzas, which he wrote for other playwrights, making in that way on an average twelve thousand francs a year, and though he liked to lead a jolly bachelor's life, he always took good care to see two-thirds of his income safely invested as a guarantee for the future.

Maurice was yet questioning whether he should go and see him, when one day chance brought them together face to face at the corner of the boulevard and the rue de Grammont.

"Ah! my dear Maurice," exclaimed Vilfrid, holding out his hand; "where in the name of goodness have you been this long time?"

Our two friends arm in arm walked away, following the boulevards in the direction of the Champs Elysées. In about five minutes Maurice had turned the conversation to the subject in question, and confided to Vilfrid his literary aspirations.

"I do declare!" exclaimed the latter, interrupting

him at the first sentence, with an air of profound stupefaction. "You turn author? You must have plenty of money, then!" . . . .

"I have enough to live upon. Still I think stage successes pay well."

"Oh! oh! it is the theatre you are after; you want to get rich? Well, let us see; have you a plan?"

"A plan?"

"Yes, a plan of the play, a dramatic situation. Let us have it, I am at your service, I will write the stanzas for you."

Maurice had revolved for some time in his mind a plot, which, in certain details, was suggestive of his own history with Iolande. He mentioned it to Vilfrid. When he had finished:

"Oh! no, my dear sir," replied the latter, shaking his head with a most discouraging air; "that won't do. I do not deny the interest of your subject, its philosophical bearing; but the public, don't you see, require something different. I would like more stirring scenes: for instance, some beautiful women bathing, and surprised by a bargeman. Don't you see the stage effect? Scenes like that are always new, when the ladies are not too faded."

"But that is not the drama," exclaimed Maurice, stupefied; "that is rather tableaux vivants."

"How is that!" replied Vilfrid, with an ironical affectation of astonishment; "then according to you, dramatic art would be that beautiful kind of stuff which we call a 'literary piece,' and for which the copyist gets one hundred and twenty francs and the author sixty."

"In a dramatic composition I must say that I like above all things interest, morality, sty...."

"Style! he says style. Well then, poor fellow, renounce your project, you are not born for the theatre. Do you know how we get rid of an unpleasant rival in the minds of our directors? With a single word: 'He writes well.' Woe to him who draws upon himself, and especially who deserves, this perfidious praise! He is lost . . . . There is but one refuge left to him: La Comédie Française."

"Is he then so much to be pitied?"

"Yes, indeed; a fine opening your Théâtre Français for a man who has any activity in his brains. The most illustrious poet, in the whole course of his life, hardly ever succeeds in getting played ten times there. Can one pass for a dramatic author with ten plays to his name? I am scarcely thirty years

old, and already one hundred and nineteen plays of mine have seen the stage. My name is more popular than those of Alfred de Musset and De Sainte-Beuve. I hope next year to become a member of the committee of dramatic authors. . . . Not that I care so much for the committee part," added he, lowering his voice in a confidential manner; "but I am informed that its members are chosen, in preference, by the minister for the cross of honor."

"The cross of honor!" Vilfrid here pronounced the word which revealed his hidden ambition; the cross of honor! his dream! his chimera! It was in vain he affected to speak of it lightly. Every time his jokes touched upon the red ribbon, they would invariably become gloomy, and betray his suffering aspirations. How he got the idea into his head, he, the spoiled child of fortune, he so happy to live, and so easy to live with, no one ever knew. "A little bit of ribbon," said he musingly one day to a friend, "gives one such a military air."

"Well," he continued, "would you like to accompany me this evening to one of our theatres? We will go in the side scenes; I will show you the very interior of the seraglio, and the secrets of the trade, and you can decide afterwards for yourself, if it suits

you better to die of starvation, trying to create masterpieces, or to live like a nabob by getting off some light trash to suit the taste of the day."

I leave you to judge if Maurice accepted the offer with eagerness. A few hours after, excited as a choir boy at his first mass, he entered by the private door for actors into one of the small theatres. The mysterious veil was now to be rent from before his eyes, he was about to be brought into the presence of these marvels of beauty, grace, and harmony, which from a distance had so much charmed him; he was at last to meet, on the very field where were engaged in glorious and pacific contest, those writers of high renown, those princes of the drama, whose brilliant minds had dazzled Europe, and whose names had so often reëchoed in his ears! At this thought how his heart must have beat!"

XIII.

When he entered the side scenes the first piece had just finished, and in the midst of the noise produced by the changing of scenes, the hurried going and coming of the machinists, the troop of figurants flocked to their room in disorder. Their faces soiled with perspiration and paint, their clumsy forms and costumes, which near by appeared to Maurice as threadbare and disgusting as they had seemed fresh and graceful at a distance, left upon his mind a painful impression."

"Bah!" he said to himself; "these are only yet the low chorus singers, I suppose, who have not the privilege of even entering the green-room of the actors. But in that sanctum I shall find grace, intellect, loveliness, the favorite actresses, and the renowned authors."

The green-room in question formed a square hall, furnished with narrow benches covered with a green worsted material. Two movable lamps, fastened at the sides of a large glass, allowed the actors to see themselves from head to foot in a good light, and to

give a last glance at their toilets before appearing upon the stage. Near the chimney, where a bright fire was blazing, were grouped, seated and standing, some young men and women, while at the farther end of the room laid a stout personage, wearing spectacles, profoundly asleep.

"Vilfrid," whispered Maurice, "now you are going to point out to me the leading characters; we will pass on afterwards to the ladies. By the way, who is that happy author, who has such an easy conscience, if I may judge by his sleep?"

"What?" exclaimed Vilfrid, "you do not know Perron, Adrian Perron, the principal of the house of Perron, Mengin, Domange & Co.? This company, which makes a specialty of the vaudeville, the annual review, and things of that kind, is represented by a single individual in order to shield its members, who are employed for the greater part in some government office, from the inconveniences of publicity, without interfering with their income as authors. The house does an excellent business, and pays every year magnificent profits to its partners."

"Why, that is quite interesting; go on."

"With pleasure. Do you see that jolly fellow there, who stands near the chimney, ogling that an-

gel with transparent tights and blue wings. He is the broad-whiskered Lemonadino, the most original and most witty philosopher in Paris, whose name one fine morning suggested to him the idea of opening on the boulevard a model café:—fifty billiard tables, one hundred chandeliers, two hundred candelabra; the walls covered with anacreontic frescos, mirrors and gilding everywhere; the taste for aristocratic luxury diffused among the masses; an exquisite living within the reach of poor wretches with not thirty cents in their pocket for a dinner—in a word, the Café du Progrès! If his syrups are as sweet as his words are piquant, and if his lemonades are as good as his vaudevilles, his fortune is made. The amiable individual who at this moment is taking his arm to lead him away is Champrosé. Revere in him the man who is one day to bury you: he is at the same time the public undertaker, and the jolliest of our vaudevillists."

In a corner was seated a broken-down old man with white and thin locks, his clothing forlorn and threadbare, and who, morose and solitary, gave a sad smile to the merry remarks that happened to reach his ears. Maurice pointed him out to Vilfrid.

"Alas!" said the latter with an expression of visi

ble sympathy. "That poor old fellow has also known the intoxication of success. Like us, he has known how to get off some smart stanzas; the prettiest actresses have contended for his favors, and the impressarios have fought over his manuscripts. To-day you see him reduced to solicit of the directors, with nearly the same air as a poor blind man begging for a penny, that they may be pleased occasionally to take up some of his old pieces. The sight of these unfortunate waifs oppress my heart."

Among the women who thronged the green-room, several shocked him at first by the freedom of their language and the boldness of their gestures, and involuntarily recalled to his mind the words of I know not what philosopher, who asserts that certain women do not belong to their sex, and as men would be only failures. Some other young beauties, on the contrary, with a frank physiognomy and bearing, attracted him by their angelic sweetness, the limpidity of their smile and their modest attitude. He approached, anxious to hear them speak, for they made him think of the charming fairy whose words in falling from her mouth changed into flowers and pearls. He listened, . . . but soon found out that they only resembled the celebrated princess of the

German tale, whose every word changed into a toad.

"Well," he said to himself, "if I ever have a son, I will take him at an early day into the side scenes of a theatre. Distant illusion is more dangerous than reality."

After the play, Vilfrid proposed to Maurice to go to a neighboring café, where a large number of dramatic authors were in the habit of congregating every evening. What picture could I make of any of them in particular likely to attract attention? All intelligent well-educated men nowadays resemble each other. There was only one, named Desjardins, who, by the contrast of his person, with the idea that we are apt to form of a play-writer, distinguished himself from the rest. Fancy to yourself a man of about fifty years of age, bald as Cæsar, with a triple chin resting on a wide cravat as on a cushion, with fat and newly shaven cheeks, and who required for himself alone in his majestic bigness the entire side of a table. The first conception you had of him was that of solemnity. He was solemn in his gestures, solemn in repose, solemn when he spoke, and solemn in his silence; and by reason of this magisterial gravity, his friends

never called him otherwise than the "venerable prelate."

A graduate from the law school, and engaged in preparing students for college, Matthieu Roussel one day said to himself that it was about time to choose a final career. Should he solicit employment from the government? Should he negotiate for a notary's or lawyer's office? The first attempt was uncertain as regards success, and promised but poor returns. The second required an outlay which was beyond his means. "Pshaw," exclaimed Matthieu, "I will try business. Or, better still, suppose I try my hand at play-writing?"

He then decided to compose a vaudeville in one act, which he left under an assumed name, the sly fellow, at the office of a small theatre. The piece succeeded admirably—it was during the month of July—and, since that glorious night, the *nom de plume* of Desjardins, henceforth celebrated by success, is the only name by which our author is known, and whose real one is never even suspected to be Matthieu Roussel. Once his foot into the fortress, Desjardins very soon understood that it would be more profitable for him to study the wants of the theatre than art itself, and to live in familiar inter-

course with the managers, than with the old and glorious masters. And then the venerable prelate was so imposing! he had such a noble air! How could one reject the work of an author who approaches with such a smiling gravity, who seats himself in your easy-chair as if he really felt himself at home there, who weighs every word, moves his head with such an intelligent air, and who knows so well how to use the proper interjection when he happens to speak of the able impulse that the new manager has given to the theatre? Through this wise conduct he has been able, in less than twenty years, to see represented on the stage more than two hundred of his pieces—parodies, reviews, tableaux vivants, fairy scenes, and vaudevilles of all kinds—which bring him in an annual income of fifteen thousand francs, and allow him to consider himself fifteen times superior to our greatest of poets, who, he has been heard to say with a compassionate disdain, are condemned to work for nothing but glory.

After ten minutes of ordinary conversation:

"By the way," exclaimed a new-comer, "can any one give us the theatre news this evening?"

Maurice at this word bounded with joy on his bench; he listened with both ears and eyes. He

now expected to hear the dramatic authors converse together on their art! From this discussion what light would be shed upon the subject for him! how many new ideas! how many ingenious discoveries! how many observations verified by facts which he could turn to his advantage! Attentive and silent, he prepared himself to witness, with a fervent composure, this little feast of intellect.

A sudden cross-fire of replies and noisy exclamations answered the question which had just been asked.

"Twelve hundred and twenty-one at the Vaudeville," replied a voice.

"Seventeen hundred and thirteen at the Variétés," called out another.

"Nine hundred and fifteen at the Gymnase."

"Fourteen hundred and thirty at the Ambigu."

"Three thousand and two at the Porte-Saint-Martin."

"Nineteen hundred and sixty at the Palais Royal."

"Notice, gentlemen," gravely interrupted Desjardins, "that the thermometer has gone down eight degrees. There is snow on the ground."

"The Palais Royal," replied, with a visible sense

of literary pride, an author whose play had been produced that evening at this amusing theatre, "the Palais Royal has gone up, however, thirty-two francs and thirty-five centimes."

"We cannot deny the fact, gentlemen," said Desjardins always in a solemn manner, "that this increase is symptomatic. Still I should like you to notice that the public who frequent this theatre are perhaps less influenced than any other by the prospect of a ministerial crisis."

"The Gymnase," exclaimed a new voice, "has gone down four hundred francs, and the 'Vaudeville' six hundred."

"Stock has gone down much more in proportion," replied the venerable prelate, in a triumphant tone.

"Are they not going," thought Maurice, "to say something of the merit of the works, and the talent of the authors?"

Vain hope! For an hour the conversation kept on the money market, on the fine weather, the bad weather, the ministerial crisis, and the next government loan. As to the pieces themselves, or the influence of their merit upon their success, it remained entirely out of the question.

"I am thinking," said Maurice, the next day to Vilfrid, "if that was a reunion of dramatic authors that you took me to last evening, or a miniature exchange?"

"What nonsense!" replied Vilfrid, laughing. "I have introduced you to some good fellows, vaudevillists by profession, in the same way as one is a lawyer, a physician, a journalist, a merchant, or anything else. In virtue of the axiom *primo vivere*, one's vocation must sooner or later be transformed into business. You talk like a professor of rhetoric who over his desk throws at the theatre a fiery glance. I bet that you sigh inwardly over its decline, and that in your youthful fervor you nourish the secret hope of restoring it to its past splendor by some brilliant masterpiece. A beautiful dream, my dear fellow! Only you are not the first who has enjoyed it. How many have I seen fly to the rescue, alas! as courageous and as ardent as you. They too wished to purify, ennoble, and transform dramatic art. After five or six unfortunate attempts, these fierce reformers have invariably come to the conclusion that the road to the theatre is the one on which those who wear new shoes feel the most uncomfortable, and they finally understand, though

often late in the day, that with flocks of men, as with flocks of sheep, the surest way is to follow the beaten track. Obscure and disdained, they have seen themselves, moreover, threatened with starvation; and that is generally the moment when these ill-appreciated geniuses condescend to write their first farce. Several of our most amusing vaudeville writers are tragical poets whom despair has driven into low comedy. Now you know the truth; do you want names?"

"You are very encouraging, I must confess," murmured Maurice.

"Take us then," replied Vilfrid, "for what we are, and what we mean to be: a set of hard-working men, who do anything that comes within our business, and who have no other ambition than to get good returns. Do we not transact our business on sound commercial principles? Under the penalty of forfeiture, do we not deliver, at the time agreed upon, the ordered merchandise? In short, do we not create literary associations, which are real business firms? Wait," added he gayly, "I must show you my cash-book."

"Your what?"

"Cash-book, kept in double entry. Who knows? my accounts may reconcile you to the business."

Vilfrid drew from his drawer a memorandum book and handed it to his friend.

"This is," said Vilfrid, while Maurice examined with stupefaction the curious register, "this is the true *Théâtre Comique*, the true theatre of modern progress!"

The latter, after glancing over the book, stopped at the first three months of the year, the most profitable in the business of a vaudevillist. Besides there was no need of going any farther to see at once the spirit of order which pervaded all the operations of his happy friend. No merchant could have kept his books with more regularity or precision. Vilfrid made no distinction between any of his pieces, whether applauded or hissed; they were all impartially registered, with the number of performances obtained, and the amount of copyright. To "profit and loss" were inscribed the rejected pieces, or those which for some reason or other had not been put on the stage. The truth is failure or success were all the same to him; to his mind there were no good, bad, or indifferent *works;* all he saw in the matter was good, bad, or indifferent *returns*.

XIV.

Notwithstanding his affected disdain for talent and good taste, Vilfrid was a man of considerable mind; the author was better than his works, and Maurice knew it. For this reason, although he had an extremely moderate admiration for the literature of his protector, he did not hesitate, when he had finished his drama, to submit it to the judgment of this sceptical vaudevillist.

"I like your piece," said the latter to him, after attentively listening to it, "and I have confidence in my taste, for the reason perhaps that I do not weary it much in my own service. If you had wished to become one of us, I would have endeavored to open to you the vaudeville theatres, and to make you a partner in our receipts. But since your aim is at the same time higher and more disinterested, we will go straightway and knock at the door of the Théâtre Français. Your drama is worthy of it. And besides it is the most friendly establishment to beginners."

The advice responded but too well to Maurice's

secret ambition, and he was not slow to follow it. He therefore presented himself the same day at the office of the secretary-general of the theatre, handed in his manuscript, and requested a reading. At the end of three weeks, after the examination of the work, the reading was granted; two months after, he appeared before the committee.

Vilfrid, who was considered an able reader, and who had taken upon himself to do the reading for his friend, was seated at the table, covered with the usual green cloth and surmounted by a small desk, before which so many of our greatest poets have sat in their turns. After taking a mouthful of water, he commenced, while Maurice, scarcely breathing, immovable, and rigid in his chair, anxiously watched the countenances of the actors, and endeavored stealthily to ascertain their impressions; but their faces, so expressive and movable on the stage, remained impenetrable. Not a smile came to brighten them, not a tear escaped their eyelids. One might have supposed them to be the impassible masks of the Greek theatre. When he had finished, Vilfrid rose, bowed silently to the judges who silently returned the courtesy, after which he passed into the next room with the author of the drama, there to await

the result of the ballot. Maurice's heart beat violently. He could hear the noise of the balls falling into the urn, and soon after the royal commissioner appeared before him. With a grave and measured step the latter approached the patient, and tendering his hand, with a friendly smile:

"Sir," he said, "accept my sincere compliments. Brilliant, eloquent, witty, you have succeeded in blending in your work the flights of sincere passion with a correctness of detail which is very rare in these days."

Maurice felt his heart expand.

"The qualities in which you are wanting are those which can only be acquired by time, experience of the stage, the art of leaving and entering, what shall I say? the common routine of the business. On the other hand, you possess all those which come directly from nature, and which can never be acquired, not even by the most indefatigable labor—the instinct of the dramatic situation, the sentiment of the dialogue, the composition of the characters, etc."

"What is the result of the ballot?" interrupted Vilfrid, who knew what in official language all

these fine words amounted to, and eager to know what was done.

"Three white, six red, and one black. The piece is received with corrections."

"Received!" cried Maurice, with joy.

"With corrections!" muttered Vilfrid, making a wry face.

"What are the corrections indicated by the gentlemen?" naïvely inquired Maurice.

The manager looked at him perfectly amazed.

"We do not understand each other," he replied, somewhat embarrassed. "When we receive a piece with corrections—you may not be aware of it, sir—it in reality means that we refuse it."

"Oh!" said the poor author, stunned by the blow.

"Only, it is an encouraging refusal."

"And so it is, my dear friend," gayly replied Vilfrid; "I even know authors who have been encouraged after this fashion through their whole lives."

"Would you have preferred a pure and simple refusal?" asked the manager, slightly piqued.

"Oh! sir," replied Vilfrid, laughing, "how poorly we understand each other! I would have

preferred a pure and simple acceptance; that's all."

Thereupon, after the usual courtesies, he drew Maurice away, who, after thrusting with some difficulty his unfortunate roll of papers into the deepest pocket of his overcoat, followed his protector, asking himself how it happened that, in an Institution where they profess to speak the French language—which is the language of clearness and precision *par excellence*—better than anywhere in France, they had finally succeeded in giving to the words "I accept" the sense of "I refuse," and in saying "yes" when they meant "no."

"Come," said Vilfrid to his companion, while passing through the garden of the Palais Royal, "put away that bewildered air. To be refused by the Comédie Française is not among the things that kill. If that were the case, our greatest dramatic geniuses would have all been buried at thirty years of age. We will try elsewhere."

Thereupon he took him to a theatre, which now no longer exists, but where once upon a time, and even at that very period, charming comedies were played. From the moment he had sent in his name to the manager, the latter called him at once in his

private room, and amiably asked, but not without a certain affectation of importance and superiority which struck Maurice, what good wind had brought him there.

"A good wind, indeed," replied Vilfrid, "and one which does not blow every day—a good piece."

"One of yours?" inquired the director, smiling somewhat maliciously through the imposing majesty of his attitude.

"Oh, no! don't be alarmed; not one of mine; but a friend's, whose talent I should like much to possess."

"His name?"

"His name is Maurice Vernier; as to the man, here he is."

At a sign from the vaudevillist, Maurice, quite confused, drew the manuscript from his pocket, and handed it to the director.

At the name of Maurice Vernier the latter put on a thoughtful air, as if he sought to remember something; then, finding that his memory did not serve him, and that the young author was entirely unknown to him:

"I will read, sir," said he, "your work with attention; but Monsieur Vilfrid Daroux can tell

you to what extent we are encumbered with plays of every description. There, look at that bundle of papers!" and he pointed to an enormous heap of manuscripts lying on the table. "And that is not all; look here!" and he opened a closet filled with green, blue, yellow, and red covers, which, undoubtedly, to the minds of their authors represented as many masterpieces.

Maurice contemplated this mountain of dramas, comedies, and vaudevilles with stupor.

"You may be obliged, perhaps," continued the manager, who gradually straightened himself up in his cravat, "to wait a short time the result of my examination. At all events you can count on my sincere desire to find your piece worthy of my theatre. Why! my dear sir! whatever may be said to the contrary, is it not our object to find good works, as well as it is our business to seek them? When a rare bird falls into our hands, you may well believe we are not foolish enough to let it fly away."

Our two friends would have felt a delicacy to infringe any longer upon a time so valuable. They took leave of the impressario, who, with a protecting air, conducted them to the door, after having ar-

ranged for them to return in three weeks to receive his answer.

During the course of this visit, Maurice had had the time to examine the personage to whom he was introduced by Vilfrid Daroux. Tall and clumsily-formed, yet young-looking in spite of his sixty years, his hair, as black as a raven, betrayed, by its uncommon lustre and perfume, the use of most violent cosmetics. A heavy golden chain dangled on a vest of embossed velvet—the only fault in a toilet otherwise as correct as that of an attorney-general. He carried his head erect, as a man who knows his own worth, and weighed his words like one who knows their value. Magnificent in his gestures, he was not less imposing in his bearing. In spite of his gravity, however, he occasionally indulged in little witticisms, and then you should have heard all those who came under his direction, authors as well as actors, express their delight by laughter and applause! After all, is not he the greatest wit who holds the key of the money-drawer?

Viewed in various ways, some called him proud as a peacock; others found him as solemn as a goose. In regard to his origin, opinion was still

more diversified. Some made him out, in times long gone by, the author of a third part of a vaudeville which was hissed at the Nouveautés; others again affirmed that in his youth he had tried to become a star actor, but failed. On one point alone they all agreed, which was, that this ex-beau of gallant fame owed his exalted position to the tender protection of a rich old lady, whose age was as respectable as her heart was foolish and generous.

Maurice, who was accustomed to the simplicity of a world in which he had always lived, could not submit to the manners of this used-up old sultan. He went away from the theatre fully persuaded that he must have left, by an unavoidable reciprocity, a rather unfavorable impression on the mind of this majestic director, and feeling very uncomfortable at the idea that he might yet be subjected, before facing the public, to many impertinent rebuffs from this inflated old pedagogue.

XV.

While waiting the good pleasure of the lord and master, who showed himself in no way eager to reply, Maurice went the rounds of all the theatres in order to watch the success of pieces played for the first time, thinking that from their fate he might in a measure be able to anticipate the destiny of his own. Almost on every occasion he noticed a circumstance which at once alarmed and disgusted him; hardly ever on the evening of a first performance the curtain rose before an independent audience. Many of the plays he saw were good, the style and acting excellent; the plot, which was original and sensible, pleased and interested him; and yet it often happened that in the midst of a cold and silent audience, he could not find in the course of the entire evening a single chance to express by applause his esteem and sympathy for the author and his work, without making himself conspicuous.

At other times, on the contrary, he was scarcely seated, when he was bewildered by acclamations and

the stamping of feet which greeted, nay, forestalled the most commonplace remarks and the most vulgar replies. As soon as the curtain rose, a round of violent and prolonged applause was given for the decorations. If a new actor appeared upon the stage: "Good! good!" roared some deep, sonorous voices from the farther end of the house. If an actress set forth with apparent naïveté, some equivocal speeches that would have made a guardsman blush: "Oh! oh! oh! how lovely! how divine! how witty?" murmured some young ladies in their boxes, with the affected emotion of little kids. In the orchestra chairs he frequently saw with stupefaction great burly fellows, built like some show-hercules, overcome at every word like little turtle doves. There were many who seemed neither to see nor to hear, but who were only there for the express purpose of applauding with all their might on every occasion, and to find fault with any one who did not appear to share their fanaticism. The reporters seemed at first astonished at this uproar, but they gradually became reconciled. Enthusiasm is contagious; and without knowing why, or without giving it even a thought, they soon did like the others. When one sheep jumps, the whole flock usually fol-

lows. The authors who were present, stupefied and bewildered, but fearing above all to be considered spiteful and invidious, did like the rest, howled with the wolves and finally applauded even louder than those hired for the purpose. In the midst of this tumult, the piece reached the end, when a regular thunder of yells, clapping of hands, striking of canes, and stamping of feet, greeted through a cloud of suffocating dust the name and, too often, the person of the author.

Irritated and disgusted with these exhibitions, Maurice concluded that he would no longer witness scenes which were invariably gotten up at every first performance to secure the success of the play; still it did not alter his intention to write for the theatre, which from having been his favorite amusement had now become his chosen occupation.

One evening, at the Gymnase, chance placed him by the side of a man he had formerly known, and for whom he had always retained an affectionate remembrance, although he had lost sight of him for quite a long time. M—— enjoyed, in spite of his youth, a great reputation in the political world. He had been a member of the Chamber of Deputies for seven years. Seated on the benches of the oppo-

sition, which at any moment might, at this particular period, come into power, he had distinguished himself by several brilliant speeches. Without too great a contrast, M—— united the elegant manners of a man of pleasure to the serious and thoughtful air of a man of study. His conversation, which was by turns witty and brilliant, or reserved and sensible, at once revealed his character. He combined the artist with the diplomatist—two natures much more alike than is generally admitted by those who are themselves neither diplomatists nor artists. His greatest weakness was perhaps a little too much preoccupation and thought of himself, of his success, of the effect to be produced—a little too much desire to shine and to please. It was easy to see that he always had an eye to his person, his language, and his attitude. Considered by the Chamber as one of its most eloquent orators, hoping to become one of its representatives in the king's council, surrounded by all the seductions which attend success and power—even the shadow of power, raised above the masses by the very votes of the masses, he liked to show that he knew his own worth; and while affable and cordial towards all those who approached him, he knew how to keep at a distance those treach-

erous familiarities which always end by lessening one's self esteem, or by placing impediments in the way of ambition.

"My dear Maurice," he said, holding out his hand, "it is a long time since I have had the pleasure of seeing you in the world. Have you renounced its follies?"

"I cannot say I have, only at present they are of a different nature, and at this very place where you come for pleasure only, I am somewhat on business."

"What! have you taken up play-writing?"

"I am trying my hand at it."

Thus they passed the evening together, exchanging their opinion on the merits of the play. The young legislator astonished his neighbor by the nicety of his remarks, by his exquisite taste for everything which concerned the scene, and for his rare knowledge of dramatic literature and its authors. After the piece, he offered Maurice a seat in his carriage.

"I sincerely hope," he said on parting, "that our relations, now that we have renewed our old acquaintance, will not end here. You have spoken to me of a play of yours," added he, in a friendly

manner; "I wish you would come and read it to me to-morrow. Who knows but I may have it in my power to be useful to you. Even Molière consulted his servant woman." . . .

The next day, after hearing the piece, which Maurice read to him, M—— could not find words enough of praise for the style, arrangement, and interest that were displayed in it.

"Do you think it could be performed?" timidly inquired the author.

"It is worthy of it. Still that is not always a reason. . . . But, however," he continued, with an air of authority which struck Maurice, "count on my sympathy, and if needs be, on my support."

XVI.

After numerous and unsuccessful visits, after many indefatigable efforts, Maurice at last received from the impressario, with whom he had left his manuscript, the following letter:

"Sir: From the report which I have received from my readers, as well as from a personal perusal of your work, I am confirmed in the opinion that your piece offers but little chance of success at my theatre. The truth is, the arrangement of the parts is well enough, but it lacks interest and life. The plot, besides, is not entirely new, and you can well understand that the director of a theatre, such as I have the honor to preside over, cannot there present new editions, however improved, of a subject which has already been hackneyed in second-rate theatres. What is postponed, however, is not lost. Bring me something that has nothing in common with what we have seen yet, a play in which I find wit, sentiment, high tone, grace, style—with some pretext for fine decorations, and for the exhibition of the pretty women, who are the ornament of my troupe and the delight of the public, and I shall be happy to reply, not by returning you, as this time, your manuscript, but by sending you an order for rehearsal. With many regrets,

"I have the honor to be, etc., etc."

"So much for number two!" said Maurice, after reading the epistle.

"Confound the fellow! but I will not give it up," exclaimed Vilfrid. "How, a piece that I have liked

so much should not please that jackass! I would swear that he has not had for one good while anything at his theatre which equals your drama, without excepting even my own lucubrations. After this we will resort to stratagem."

And without waiting to hear more, he handed Maurice his hat, gloves, and manuscript, and took, or rather dragged him to another manager.

This man's name was Magalou; he was from Auvergne. Formerly a clock-maker at Saint-Flour, by what strange concatenation of circumstances had he become the manager of a theatre in Paris? Certainly it was sufficient to see or to hear him only for two minutes, to be perfectly persuaded that he was not indebted for his place to the caprice of any old dowager. Coarse in his language, vulgar in appearance, he blended in a happy mixture the grace of a water-carrier, with the accent of an itinerant pot and kettle mender. He had the broad accent of Auvergne; his "services" were all "chervishes," his "excellents" were "ecchelents." His appointment was one of those facts that we are obliged to accept without requiring an explanation, more than of any other mystery.

"Eh! eh! here you are, my boy," he said to Vil-

frid. Good-natured, or at least apparently so, he indiscriminately patronized all the authors and comedians, never calling his artists by any other name than his "dear children," and his theatre his "dear family." "Upon my soul, your visits are getting rare."

"And I am sorry to say that this one is prompted by interest, 'father Magalou.'" "Father Magalou" was the most agreeable epithet to his ear, and Vilfrid reserved that civility for great occasions.

"Well, my boy, what can I do for you; what is it?"

"A piece, that is what it is, my venerable master; and such a piece! You will send the Vaudeville and Gymnase to the other end of the earth in a single jump."

"Of yours?"

"Of mine, in connection with Mr. Maurice Vernier here."

"Very well; I will look at it, I will look at it."

Vilfrid handed him the manuscript.

"What day must I come for an answer?"

"To-morrow, of course, to-morrow."

The next day Vilfrid presented himself at the theatre, accompanied by Maurice.

"Well," said he to Magalou, "did you read the manuscript?"

"I did."

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it is perfect—it is superb! Your roll of paper, I tell you, Vilfrid Daroux, is a sausage of gold!"

"Then, when shall we have the rehearsals?"

"Right away, my boy, right away."

"Shall we at once attend to the distributions?"

"Take your choice from my troupe; it is all at your service."

"Oh! that will not take long; in the whole piece there is but one part that may be a little difficult, perhaps, that of the 'father.' That requires some sentiment and spirit."

"The father?" stammered Magalou, without being able to disguise a certain embarrassment.

"Yes; the old gentleman so tenacious at heart to his nobiliary vanity, and outwardly so extremely liberal."

"Ah! ah! ah! just so; liberal, to be sure—liberal," repeated mechanically the manager, more and more confused, and endeavoring to smile without being able to bring it about.

"Really! what do you say of his part? It is penned with a masterly hand, is it not?"

"Oh! it is penned with a masterly hand," replied Magalou, who evidently did not understand a word of what Vilfrid was driving at.

"And what a power of language!"

"Power of language, indeed!"

"Well and good! I see that you appreciate the qualities of the piece, and that you count on a success. Henceforth, then, all deception is useless. Off with the masks!"

"Deception?" snorted Magalou, fixing on his interlocutor a bewildered look.

"I have had nothing to do with the work, and to Mr. Maurice Vernier alone belongs all the credit."

"What! you are not the author?" exclaimed the manager bounding from his seat; "you are not the author? why, then you are a scamp! then I will not receive the piece, because you have deceived me. Yes: where there is fraud in the sale of merchandise, the bargain is void; that is the law."

"With your permission. There has been no fraud. If the piece is good, of what consequence is the author?"

"Upon my soul! a good deal of consequence, on the contrary!"

"Besides, you have accepted after reading it."

"Reading it? no; by thunder, no! I have not read the first word of it! Do you think by chance that I have time to read plays? Why not at once learn them by heart, and act them too? You told me that it was yours, and I have taken it in confidence. And now I find that it comes from a person whom I never heard of. It is a fraud; there is no other word for it; the bargain is broken."

I leave you to imagine the cruel embarrassment of Maurice during this scene.

"Well, don't get so excited," gayly replied Vilfrid. "The author is not a man who will visit upon you the fullest extent of the law. You are free; only I insist that you make a mistake in giving back the manuscript; and, since you have not yet read it, I advise you to do so."

Thereupon he went out, refusing to take the roll which the confused and irritated Magalou tendered him with a supplicating hand.

"The poor fool!" said Vilfrid, in a burst of laughter. "I have been told that he plays his pieces without even looking at them, and that he

takes them from the heap just as they come; but who knows? that may not be such a bad plan after all. Chance is oftentimes more intelligent than an old imbecile; and, besides, the managers, even the most sensible, wearied and worn out as they are by innumerable and fastidious readings, can they, out of the midst of chaos which must finally become the condition of their brains, always distinguish the bad from the middling, and the good from the bad; and are they not compelled to base their calculations on the name of the author rather than on the merit of the work? Anyhow, don't be discouraged yet. It is a maxim among us that the pieces which are blackballed at first are the most successful in the end. As regards that matter, the history of the great successes for the last few years could be made the subject of an interesting study, and I am only surprised that none of our papers has yet thought of it."

Maurice began to make some serious reflections. In the artless enthusiasm of a poet he had dreamed of nothing but glory and renown; but after barely passing the threshold of the theatre, he commenced already to wonder whether it was on the stage alone that the decorations were of pasteboard, and whether

dramatic art had not nowadays better be called dramatic business.

Naturally, the first thing he did was to go and tell his friend M—— of his new tribulations.

"How! you are astonished," smilingly replied the latter, "and you think of writing! I, myself, have always thought that the celebrated saying of Beaumarchais—'Skill is better than knowledge'—was suggested to him by some piece of his, that wanted some especial nursing. Gird yourself, then, with the triple armor of the Latin poet; learn to flatter ministers and comedians, and to beg the support of newspapers; to humiliate yourself before the managers, especially if you prefer success of money to that of esteem, popularity to consideration, and a red ribbon solicited with a head bowed to the ground, to that invisible decoration, but revered by all, which is called public esteem. I hope, though, that your character will never stoop to such triumphs, and that you have enough pride in your heart to despise vanity. Whatever may be the result, I find your drama excellent; it deserves to be performed, and performed it shall be. Return in three days to your manager, and I will engage that your reception will be satisfactory.

After three days Maurice called upon Magalou. Scarcely had he sent in his card, than the latter appeared instantly at the door of his office, and extended his hand to the young author with an eagerness which almost resembled obsequiousness.

"Come in, come in, my dear Mr. Maurice," said he. "I have been very impatient to see you to tell you how very anxious I am to play your piece."

"Then you have read it," exclaimed Maurice, with delight.

"Oh! it is superb, it is amusing, most interesting; what a success!"

"I thank you, sir, for your great kindness."

"Kindness? No, it is justice. Am I not the father of the authors, as well as of the comedians in general, and all the artists in particular?"

Maurice understood all. M—— was a member of the committee on theatres, and had converted by one word the old clock-maker of Saint-Flour, who was all the more open to conversion, not having, as we have already seen, any literary opinion of his own.

XVII.

THE report that a drama in five acts, written by an unknown person, had been accepted by Magalou, and was now under rehearsal, quickly spread among the alarmed writers for the theatre. The venerable prelate, who at that moment was negotiating for half a dozen of his best and newest pieces, waited with great anxiety for a chance to read them to the actors, so as to know exactly what to think of the amount of injury that this unforeseen competition was likely to inflict upon him.

"No harm done yet, gentlemen," said he in the evening, as he entered, with a triumphant air, the café where his friends had congregated, "the actors are all dissatisfied; several of them have even gone to Magalou to throw up their parts."

"If he dies a millionaire, this Magalou," said Perron, "I am willing to become a member of the French Academy. What an imbecile he must be, to go and dabble in new and unknown authors, when he knows that he has us at his disposal!"

"The truth is," remarked Mengin, "I would not

care to live in his cash box; I should feel too lonely there."

"Do you know the author?" inquired one of those present.

"Yes," replied another, "he was here one evening with Vilfrid Daroux. He is a nice, well-behaved young man; but I defy him to get up, as we do, a play of five acts in five days."

"And then," interrupted a melancholy voice from beneath a seedy old hat, at the other end of the table, "that man has not suffered yet! Upon my word, what can one know of life and of the human heart, who has not been reduced to watch, towards six or half-past six in the evening, the route that your friend usually takes, in order to borrow a five-franc piece of him? Before writing for the theatre, it is necessary to know the world; and to know it well, my boys, one must have led for some time the life of a bohemian."

"Anyhow," replied with unction the venerable prelate, "we shall soon know. In a few days we will be able to judge of the dramatic talent of the author, and the administrative intelligence of the manager. Let us reserve our opinion until then, and above all, let us show by the kind reception

that we give to a new brother, what a fraternity there is among men of letters!"

In spite of the wisdom of this advice, the venerable prelate was seen, during the following days, roving with a mysterious air through the passage-ways of Magalou's theatre, having an ear to every rumor, listening with an assumed astonishment to the actors who appeared pleased with their parts, and with marks of sympathy and compassion to those who appeared discontented; shrugging his shoulders with an air of secret acquiescence when they spoke before him of Magalou's utter want of ability, and smiling with the silent sarcasm of an old diplomatist every time the conversation in the green-room turned upon the brilliant talent of young Vernier.

Meanwhile Maurice commenced to notice around him the first symptoms of opposition. His piece, at first so much admired, seemed to grow less from hour to hour in the estimation of its interpreters, without his being able to account for this sudden depreciation.

Still he had now gone too far to give it up, and so after the usual number of rehearsals, the great day finally arrived. All the hesitations, all the

doubts, all the internal struggles which had preceded the decisive moment, were known to the theatre world, where the piece had been condemned in advance; and already an ominous impression had found its way even among the public. Notwithstanding, the house at an early hour was filled to overflowing. All Maurice's friends had naturally come to enjoy the fête. He himself, very much excited, thought of Iolande, and dreading above everything a failure, which would render him forever ridiculous in the eyes of the Marquis de Mauvezin and his young wife, he inwardly regretted having ventured on an experiment of which he now only saw the dangers, in the same way as at first he had merely considered its advantages.

At last the curtain rose. During the opening scenes, the public appeared to listen with considerable curiosity. The first act seemed to please, but one would have said that the audience, in spite of their wish to do so, dared not applaud. At the second and third act the house commenced to assume quite a different aspect. The loudly-expressed satisfaction of a number of the best writers and critics encouraged some timid sympathies; a murmur of approbation succeeded the funereal silence of the first

act, and a few spectators began to clap their hands. But the fifth act decided the success. The public, after a painful resistance, yielded at last to their feelings, and at the end of the piece lavished upon the author thunders of applause and acclamations. Vilfrid went over to congratulate his friend. Some journalists, M—— and several renowned dramatic authors followed to the green-room to compliment him on the happy result. It was but too evident that if the piece had not been killed, so to speak, before its birth, it would have proved a paying success.

On the whole, while his play did not absolutely fill Magalou's money box, it certainly drew the public, and Maurice had the right to congratulate himself on the satisfactory issue of the attempt. Nevertheless he ceased to see dramatic literature in the same light as formerly; the reflections of Vilfrid, his scepticism, and his disdain of art were now explained to him. He began to understand that attempting to struggle against the public taste is simply a childish folly, and that what cannot be cured must only be endured. More than ever an enthusiast in dramatic art—the most noble of arts, he said; more than ever disgusted with dramatic

trade—the most miserable of all trades, added he; prevented by circumstances from indulging in the former, and very firmly resolved not to engage in the latter, he was satisfied with having gained his point in the eyes of an enlightened public, and he felt he could withdraw with honor from the battle-field. The result was sufficient to satisfy his pride, and so he went to see his protector to acquaint him with his determination.

"You will at least render me this justice," said the latter, in reply to Maurice's grievances, "that I have done nothing to keep you from your enterprise, and yet I foresaw the result. Like you, have I not also wished in former times to try my fortune at play-writing? Ah me! yes; I have also had my first performance. Unfortunately though, instead of coming off victorious, I only made a dreadful failure. My dramatic misfortune was one of the sins of my youth, which I don't like much to remember, although the penny papers take great pleasure in reminding me of it every time I venture to speak at the Chamber; my friendship for you entitles you to this confession. That evening has proved the most painful accident and at the same time the most happy event in my life. What would

have become of me if I had succeeded? Without any doubt a poor third-rate author, spending his time in carrying from one theatre to another all over Paris his unsuccessful manuscripts. My failure opened my eyes. I began to see that life depends upon the direction we give to it. It often requires more merit and labor to reach a mere mediocrity than to ascend the highest summits. If Talleyrand had been a dramatic author, he would never have been more than a witty writer; with a little good luck he would probably have made his six thousand francs a year, and would have ended his days angling on the banks of the Marne. How many vaudevillists I have known who, in order to bring out three poor miserable acts on the stage, have displayed as much cunning, activity, and suppleness as our great diplomatist has done during the most difficult circumstances of his life! There are five or six in the Chamber who are dramatic failures, like me, and who, like me, have reached, or are on the point of reaching, the most exalted positions. You have come off better than I; why should you not be also more successful than I on other scenes? You have still another advantage over me. I presented myself in the political arena alone, without friends,

without any support. Now you must be aware that my influence is at your service as well as my friendship. The assistance which I have rendered you with the manager of a theatre, be sure, I shall be more happy yet to offer you with my most influential friends and with the most popular papers of my party."

Three days after, M—— introduced his protégé to the chief editor of a paper which defended the interests of a party of which he was himself one of the most distinguished leaders. Maurice's situation was a difficult one.

They still remembered in the Parisian press the royalist ideas which he formerly supported. Without changing too suddenly the tenor of his articles, he knew, with a perfect tact, gradually how to steer in a new direction. From a Jacobite, as he was, he became a tory. His appearance in the press, moreover, was only of short duration. It lasted just long enough to enable him to feel those secret sufferings of conscience and honor, which every man of heart experiences, when, in order to pursue the business of a journalist, he is obliged to obey a party order, and to flatter that party in its most contracted, unjust, and exaggerated views.

Six months after, a vote of the Chamber brought the friends of M—— into power, and the king appointed the latter Minister of the Interior. The next day a decree appeared which appointed Mr. Maurice Vernier *chef de cabinet* to the Minister of the Interior.

XVIII.

The first time he went out, the young *chef de cabinet* was greeted with such smiles and salutes as, until then, he had never any idea of. Those who formerly gave him a commonplace nod of the head, or waved him a good-morning at the end of their fingers, now, when he met them, manifested a violent desire to approach, moderated by the fear of importuning him. He had never suspected all the flatteries, all the caresses, and all the supplications which can be expressed by a simple touch of the hat. Visitors flowed into his office. Everybody he had ever known contrived the most impossible pretexts to come and offer him their congratulations. He had not been installed eight days, when the usher handed him the card of Desjardins, and announced that the latter solicited an audience.

"Tell him to walk in," said Maurice, curious to know what he could want of him, this good comrade who had manifested so little disposition to show himself a friend.

The venerable prelate entered in a grave and

composed manner. At a sign from Maurice he took a chair, and seated himself near him.

"Sir," he said, with the sweetness of honey in his voice and smile, "I have been very impatient to present my compliments to an old brother artist. Allow me also to add my thanks for your hearty reception. I hope it may prove the prelude to some higher favor."

"Favor?" inquired Maurice with astonishment. 'Yes, sir. Excuse my frankness; with a man of your mind I always go straight to the point. You probably are aware that in preparing the lists which are presented each year for the signature of the king, the day preceding his birthday, the last Minister of the Interior deigned to give my name some consideration." . . . .

Here the venerable prelate stopped as if he experienced an invincible embarrassment in finding the proper words for the expression of his thoughts.

"Explain yourself, I beg of you," remarked the *chef de cabinet.*

"Must I tell you?" replied Desjardins, mincing like an old coquette, and fumbling with his left hand in his button-hole, on which he cast at the same time a furtive glance; "and can't you guess?"

"Oh! yes, yes; I guess," said Maurice, repressing a smile.

"My name," remarked the vaudevillist, "appeared last year in the second category. And, therefore, I had reason to suppose that this year it would head the list."

"We have not yet turned our attention to this matter," replied Vernier. "But when we do, be assured that I shall examine all your titles with the greatest care."

"I have the right to assert," continued Desjardins, "that none of my brother artists can set forth the same claims to consideration. Vilfrid Daroux, my most redoubtable competitor, has only produced about one hundred and twenty works, while I, sir—I can prove it by the agents' registers—I have handed in to different theatres two hundred and twenty-three pieces. Besides, my name always occurs first in my pieces written in connection with others. Now you are probably aware that the cross is always given to the partner whose name figures first in the firm. And by so doing, it is the house that is honored. Therefore . . . ."

"Permit me, sir," hastily interrupted Maurice, smiling, "not to accept the entire analogy. A literary

collaboration bears but a very remote comparison, in my eye, to a manufactory of stockings or silks. The minister who accords the recompense is the only judge of the merit, and his choice in a mere question of taste and quality cannot be trammelled by considerations of seniority and quantity."

"I hope, sir," replied the vaudevillist, with a dash of vinegar in his honey, "you do not mean to insinuate that my works have no other quality than their quantity."

"Heaven forbid that I should pretend to question your merits? I beg of you not to take personally a mere expression of principles. If I had wished to bring the discussion on personal grounds, there is a name you have already pronounced yourself, and which I would have thought of in the first instance."

"That of Vilfrid Daroux, I presume. I know you honor him with your esteem."

"What is that you say?" gayly exclaimed Maurice. "My friendship does not honor him the least in the world: I am his friend, and he is mine; that is all there is about it. But certainly my affection for him will never go so far as to make me unjust towards you. Meanwhile," added he, smiling with an expression of true good humor, "I do not conceal

from you the fact that in case of equal merit, the esteem you allude to might very possibly cause the scales to weigh in his favor. You do not dispute his talent, I suppose, since you have so often deigned to associate it with your own. Well, then, what I appreciate in him above all is still less his talent than the little he seems to think of it. The most precious quality of Vilfrid, in my eyes, is that charming modesty with which he smilingly acknowledges that his vaudevilles, his reviews, and his fairy plays do not amount to much, and have no other merit than to insure him his dinner each day, his little cup of coffee, a good bed, and whatever else he may like. Does he not show in this way that he is better than his works, and is not this complete absence of all literary vanity preferable to that perfect satisfaction with one's self which generally proves that a person is pretty well played out, and, therefore, incapable of producing anything further that would entitle him to the high distinction which you solicit? For these reasons, it seems to me, that a recompense granted to a man like Daroux is not only a favor, but an encouragement."

"I see, sir," interrupted Desjardins, "they have

not deceived me, and that all your sympathies and preferences are, really, bestowed in advance upon my rival."

"If I have sympathies, be sure," replied Maurice with vivacity, "I have no preferences. The titles, which I suppose you have set forth in your petition to the minister, I again repeat, will be looked into with care. As to my friendship for Vilfrid, it is my duty here to state, that it cannot fail to have a certain weight in the appreciation of your relative merits He tendered me a friendly hand when others would have gladly seen me fail; he has used his influence in my behalf at a time when certain unkindly-disposed persons rendered his support to me of the greatest value. Is it not just, now that the wheel of fortune has turned, that I show myself grateful for his kindness by a cordial reciprocity?"

"Most assuredly," grumbled the venerable prelate, with a smile which did not indicate anything too venerable or pontifical; "it has been truly said, it is always dangerous to make enemies of persons smaller than ourselves."

Maurice fixed upon him a look which compelled him to lower his eyes.

"However that may be, sir," continued the prelate,

keeping his eyes down upon the ground, and with a marked intention of irony, "be well persuaded, whatever else they may have told you, I have in no way influenced the fate of your drama. The public must be pleased; everything depends upon that, and it is public opinion alone, in spite of ministers, deputies, king, and *chefs de cabinet* themselves, which decides the question of success. As to the object of my visit, let us talk no more about it. It is the public, after all, who judges the acts of the minister . . . as well as the works of the author."

Maurice rose with an air which indicated, "you may leave the presence," and the solemn Desjardins took leave, always with the same gravity, but with a confusion in his eye, a wavering in his gait, and a grimace in his smile, which betrayed the spite and disappointment of the dismissed solicitor.

The first of May following the *Moniteur* announced officially to the world, who cared but little for the detail, the promotion of Mr. Vilfrid Daroux, dramatic author, to the rank of Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. Maurice, after ascertaining that the two candidates had equal claims to the cross, since one deserved it no more than the other, had

determined to bestow the decoration on his jolly comrade.

This is the way things generally go—favors are always for friends or relatives. So much the worse for those who have only their talent to help them along; they may wait!

XIX.

Two or three days after the visit of the celebrated vaudevillist, there was another surprise for Maurice. The Count de Brugal was announced.

"Yes, my dear young friend, it is I," said he, abruptly entering, and most cordially taking the hand of the *chef de cabinet;* "it is my very self. Since the Revolution of July, I have never set my foot in this place, and it is only you who could again bring me here. Your people owe you something, I think, for this visit, which is only made on your account."

Maurice, stupefied, could not find a word to reply.

"True merit," added the count, "sooner or later makes its way. You have now attained one of those conspicuous positions, where it is easy for a man of talent to distinguish himself. In the name of our old friendship, I want to be one of the first to congratulate you."

"I am profoundly grateful," stammered Maurice, "for this mark of kind remembrance. Be assured that I should have forestalled you, if I had dared to renew relations so long since broken off,"

"Well!" gayly interrupted the count, "I see with pleasure the past has left no bitterness between us. Why, my dear fellow, you know very well that neither myself, wife, or daughter, could have acted otherwise. It would be unjust to make us responsible for a refusal that has caused us as much suffering as it has you, and for which you must only hold society and its laws accountable. In spite of the apparent coldness that has existed since the delicate circumstances which have separated us, my friendship for you has not, at heart, changed in the least, and I hope always to remain your best friend."

"You may count on my reciprocity," replied Maurice, with a certain emotion, disarmed by the courteous forms of the count, and holding out his hand to him.

"You know my liberalism, don't you? Let an occasion present itself, and then you will see." . . .

At this well-known phrase, the young *chef de cabinet* looked down without breathing a word, and with some difficulty repressed a smile.

"No one, you ought to know, is more anxious than I to bring about a speedy conciliation between the upper classes of society; but why shall we be blind to the difficulties which stand in the way of

this desirable union? Yes, from a political aspect it is necessary, it is easy; socially, or, if you please, from a worldly point of view, it is impossible. We cannot make up our minds so readily to give our daughters to the bourgeoisie, and we will but rarely have occasion to ask for theirs. Besides, who is there among us who would be willing to set the example? What father would dare to be the first to brave the disguised sneers of our drawing-rooms and the epigrams of that society in the midst of which our children are destined to live?"

"In that case," replied Maurice, smiling, "permit me to doubt, my dear sir, the near success of your liberalism. The loyal and open practice of sentiments of honorable equality, which I am persuaded is inherent in you all, would serve you better in this country, I believe, than all your fine speeches in honor of liberty."

"No matter!" exclaimed the count. "In spite of differences of opinion, two men of heart will always understand each other in France, and my visit to you proves my confidence in your loyalty. Shall I tell you, my dear friend, from the moment I heard of your appointment, my selfishness came out, together with my old friendship for you? 'Yes,' I said to

myself, 'I will go and see him, and in spite of all that has passed between us, in spite of the painful circumstances which have so unfortunately interfered with our intimacy—what do I say?—for the very reasons which have separated us, I will go to him; it is he who shall be the protector of my son-in-law.'"

"I?" stammered Maurice, utterly astonished.

"I know your influence with the minister. A few words skilfully dropped by you, a little management, a little urging, will do the business. And my daughter will owe to you the advancement of her husband."

"The truth is," replied Maurice, with emotion, "there are some changes contemplated among the prefects. Be assured that the claims of the Marquis de Mauvezin will be looked into with all the consideration of which he is deserving, and with the sincere friendship that I have always felt for you."

"His claims?" inquired the Count de Brugal, with an astonished air.

"Certainly."

"My dear Maurice," said the count smiling, "we do not quite understand each other, I am afraid. To obtain a promotion, which it would be impossi-

ble to refuse him, my son-in-law most certainly would require neither your intervention nor mine. What I expect of you would be a little . . . a very little favor. You know how that is done, without any noise, a word dropped in a quiet way." . . .

"It will be sufficient, I am sure, for M. de Mauvezin," replied Maurice, "that justice be rendered to his merit."

M. de Brugal gave a sly look at his interlocutor. "Is he making fun of me?" he thought to himself.

"No," he replied, on recovering his former confidence; "we do not understand each other, I see it well. It is customary, my dear friend, while taking into account the personal merit of a candidate, to take into consideration also his birth, his family, his social relations, and finally, the quality of his protectors. Government offices are now accessible to every one. Well, that is right enough; I have nothing to say against it. It is the principle—the principle of '89—so much for the question of right. But now comes the choice . . . . and there I come in to solicit from you a little favor for my son-in-law. You are aware, I suppose, that whoever obliges one of us obliges all. Be sure that in our

world every one will be thankful for courtesies extended to any of its members."

"My greatest desire," replied Maurice, a little annoyed by this persistence, "is to be able, without injustice, to render to the marquis the service you expect of me, and I swear to you that I will act in regard to him as if he were my own brother. What can I do more?"

"Well," thought the count, taking leave of the *chef de cabinet* with a charming cordiality, "my young friend, with all his scruples, is either a deep fellow, who seeks an occasion to revenge himself; or he is a stupid, who imagines that fine sentiments make fine administrators."

"Well," thought Maurice from his side, "my noble friend will remember, I am very sure, my hesitation to grant him an unjust favor a longer time than he has remembered the eagerness of my father to render him a service."

XX.

Everybody knows how varied are the duties of a *chef de cabinet.* The reading of the correspondence, the interviews granted to solicitors and public functionaries, the important and confidential examination of numerous affairs, and the surveillance of persons employed in the office, absorb his days and sometimes even a portion of his nights. Living in the government building, in order to be near the minister, he is obliged to hold himself in readiness at all hours, at midnight as well as at six in the morning, in order to answer immediately the call of his chief. If the relations of respectful obedience from the subordinate to the superior mark the distance which separates the minister from his secretary, their mutual reserve is necessarily modified by the intimacy which cannot fail to arise between two men so closely brought together. Does not the *chef de cabinet* possess all the secrets of his superior? Does he not see him in the morning, in his *robe de chambre,* at breakfast, sipping his coffee like any other mortal? By the multiplicity and assiduity of

their relations, does he not penetrate into the most intimate life of the secretary of state, over whom he exercises an influence equal to the confidence that the latter places in him? Now, one can well understand that this confidence must be unlimited.

For the first time, Maurice felt himself struggling hard with the duties of a position, the importance of which elevated him in his own estimation. From the high post he occupied, he embraced in one glance the entire political panorama of France. From the most remote quarters, all news centred in his cabinet; no single thing occurred in any part of the territory of which the reflex was not immediately felt on his desk. These labors exalted the more his imagination as, on entering upon the duties of his office with all the illusions of youth, he had exaggerated, perhaps, their importance, and taken too seriously certain details and certain prejudices which would have drawn at the utmost but a smile from old foxes in the business. It is thus, for example, that he placed conscience above personal interest, the spirit of impartiality in the distribution of offices above the intelligent calculations of favoritism; justice, finally, and truth in the solution of all social or political questions above the considerations

of office or dynasty. He did not believe that ambition, spite, rancor, or vanity should ever exert any influence over the impassible mind of the statesman, and above all not over his protector, his minister, in his eyes the *beau ideal* of a statesman!

To speak the truth, M—— fully justified the devoted affection of his secretary by his conduct towards him; kind, affable, cordial, he had remained his friend while becoming his chief. Of a character extremely sympathetic, in the sense which the Italians attached to the word *simpatico*, he was always the same amiable and simple man, with that slight affectation of haughtiness which is not disdain, but which excludes any importunate familiarity. As much as ever he liked luxury, the theatre, art, society, and did not resemble in any way those important politicians who seem to think that it is sufficient to be stupid in order to give themselves the appearance of thinking men, and who, either from disdain or because they are not clever enough, affect to remain strangers to the vivacity of the French mind and to the brilliant interchange of easy ideas. He would have conversed with you on the latest comedy, or the novel of the day, with as much interest as a newspaper critic. Meanwhile it was not

in this kind of mental recreation alone that he sought relief from his labors. The society of ladies, above all, presented to his excellency the Minister of the Interior a rare and exquisite attraction. If in accepting the office of a minister he had imposed upon himself austere duties, it was no reason for him, he thought, to give up his social habits. Nay, what is more, had he not inwardly hoped, perhaps, that in consideration of these new duties he would be able to create new relations, and even to facilitate the enjoyment of them? His life was thus divided between the labors of his office and his successes in the drawing-room; and Maurice, charmed with that ease of character, and with that suppleness of mind, felt his gratitude and enthusiasm increase every day more and more for the man who astonished him by such a happy blending of activity in study and ardor in pleasure.

On one point, however, he could not help feeling a secret astonishment. It seemed to him that some change had come over the former opinions of his minister. Certain questions even received from the latter, in his circulars, a solution diametrically opposite from that which he had set forth in his speeches. Thus, having been charged to draw up a report rela-

tive to the difficulty which had caused the fall of the late cabinet, Maurice had thought it necessary to draw his conclusion, as his chief had formerly done at the tribune, in a spirit of ultra-liberalism. The latter, after hurriedly examining the work of his secretary, cast on him a glance which denoted an extreme surprise.

"How is that?" he said. "I have perhaps read too quickly, and not well understood your idea."

"I have endeavored, sir, to set forth your opinions."

"My opinions?"

"I have only transcribed in official language the eloquent discourse that you made last year at the Chamber."

"At the Chamber!" exclaimed M——, slightly annoyed. "But, my dear sir, last year I was in the opposition, and this year I am in power. At that rate the opposition in becoming the government would simply remain opposition, just like the conspirator of the comedy, who from habit conspired in the end against himself."

This surprise was not for Maurice the only one of the same character.

As an orator he had violently declaimed at the tribune against the English alliance, against its ruinous

exactions, and against the perpetual sacrifices of all kinds which it imposed upon France; now that he was minister, he showed himself gentle as a lamb towards perfidious Albion. He had not a word to say against the exactions of England, but only spoke of the concessions which we should be ready to make in order to keep the good-will of this precious neighbor.

"The English alliance," said he confidentially to Maurice, "don't you see, my dear sir, is a question of life or death, in France, for every new dynasty."

On the benches of the opposition he had loudly claimed for an electoral reform; now that he was minister he proclaimed the excellence of the present system of taxation, exalted the good spirit of the electoral body, and authoritatively stated, in the midst of the applause of the members, that no combination could give to the country a Chamber more independent, more disinterested, more enlightened, more patriotic, etc. . . .

"The electoral cense," said he confidentially to Maurice, "don't you see, my dear sir, is a question of life or death for the ministerial majority at the next elections!"

Formerly he had spoken with strong indignation

against that constant increase of expenses, which necessarily leads to an increased taxation. To the orators who found fault with the new budget from its weighing too heavily upon the country, he replied that progress is not a vain word, and that, in virtue of the law of progress, a nation is all the richer for its government being placed in a position to spend money more liberally.

"The budget," said he confidentially to Maurice, "don't you see, my dear fellow, is a question of life or death for our salaries."

On their side, the members of the late cabinet, who were now sitting on the benches of the opposition, had taken up in support of their cause all the theories that the members of the former opposition, now that they were seated on the ministerial benches, had repudiated. It was always the same tune and the same concert. Only the musicians had changed instruments; the big drum had taken up the clarionet, and the trombone now played the fiddle.

What struck Maurice still more in the conduct of his protector was the personality which the latter brought into the administration of public affairs. When an important law was presented to the chamber, it seemed to the conscientious *chef de*

cabinet that M—— was more anxious as to the effect that his speech was going to produce than of the good which would result from the new measure. Before making his appearance in the assembly where he was to speak, he saw him carefully arranging his hair, faultlessly tying his cravat, and giving as much attention to his personal appearance as a comedian who is about to appear upon the stage; when the meeting was over, he saw him smiling, proud, and elated, as an actor after the final ovation. The following day, when reading the papers, it was not the development of the question itself that drew the attention of the orator; no, he went straight to the last paragraph—to the paragraph that speaks of the brilliancy of the delivery, the merit of the discourse, the applause of the public, the success of the comedy. Radiant, brilliant, he went, on those evenings, through the drawing-rooms of the great world, shaking hands with the pretty women, and returning with a triumphant air the respectful courtesies addressed to him. His white cravat disappeared under the red cordon of the Legion of Honor; he wore all his crosses, all his decorations studded with diamonds and resplendent in the light of the chandeliers. It could be plainly seen on these great occasions

that the consequences of the measure he had just presented were the object that preoccupied him the least. An adversary who, while opposing his ideas, would find words to eulogize his talent, was sure, in spite of his negative vote, to be better received than he who voted on the right side, and lauded to the skies the merit of his views, without manifesting an equal enthusiasm for the genius of the orator. Around the eloquent minister was an atmosphere impregnated with seductions and charming flatteries. The true statesman enjoys his success away from the noisy crowd—disdainful of renown, applause, and incense, with his eyes steadily fixed on the aim proposed, and on the future results of the measure which is about to be put into execution. But this is rarely the case; almost always the exclusive and only object of the orator is the brilliant and immediate triumph of his language, the satisfaction of his vanity as an artist, and the confirmation of his popularity.

XXI.

From the day that Maurice, to his great displeasure, had a glimpse of all these truths, his patriotism and his personal sentiments were necessarily at variance. Still his affection for his protector proved the strongest, and the latter could only congratulate himself upon the devoted co-operation of his secretary. It was even about this time that he gave him the most flattering proof of his confidence, by asking him for a confidential report on the subject of the promotion of prefects, soon to take place, which Maurice had alluded to in his interview with the Count de Brugal. According to his promise, the *chef de cabinet* looked over the records of the Marquis de Mauvezin before any others, having firmly resolved to warmly recommend the husband of Iolande to the minister as much as was in his power, without injury to other parties who were better entitled than he. In vain he searched all the registers, looked over all the records, but felt compelled to admit that no good reasons could be advanced in behalf of his protégé. The notes indicated an elegant

man, giving excellent dinners, smoking excellent cigars, riding excellent horses, but destitute of all influence over the public mind of his department, and, above all, as ignorant as a fish in all matters of administration. Maurice reluctantly acquitted himself of the unpleasant task, and handed in his report to the minister.

"How is this?" said M——, casting a glance over the report; "I do not see here the name of the Marquis de Mauvezin."

"His name is not there, sir."

"But I thought there was some link of friendship between you and him, or at least with the family of the marchioness?"

"It is for this very reason, sir, I have endeavored to find some honest pretext which would enable me to present his name to you at the head of the list; but I gave it up when I found that, by so doing, I should be guilty of a great injustice."

"Pshaw! look again," replied the minister, throwing himself back in his arm-chair with a smile, which seemed to say: "Seek and you shall find."

Maurice bowed and withdrew.

"Well," inquired his chief the next day, "my

dear and conscientious secretary, have you at last found your protégé worthy of my protection?"

"Well, sir," replied Maurice, "I have again consulted the records of the marquis, and after having examined the titles of his competitors, cannot possibly recommend him to your preference, so flagrant would be the injustice!"

"Come," replied the minister, smiling with a slight expression of spite and bad humor, "I will have decidedly to do the thing myself in order to oblige you. Have the records of your friend brought and placed upon my desk."

Eight days after, the official list of the nominations appeared in the *Moniteur*. At the head figured the Marquis de Mauvezin, who had been called from the smallest prefecture of our mountain frontiers, to the administration of one of the finest departments of Normandy. Maurice, who, since the brief conversation that we have related, had not exchanged with the minister a single word in regard to the marquis, thought he saw in this favor, which was as unexpected as it was undeserved, a delicate attention of his chief—who had wished undoubtedly to spare him a painful capitulation of conscience, and at the same time to give him an opportunity

to present to the Brugal family a most agreeable surprise. At the moment when in the joy of his heart, with a smile on his lips, he was going to find the minister, to express his thanks the door suddenly opened, and a veiled lady passed out. Her eyes were cast down, her attitude was modest, and she appeared to make herself as compact as possible in order to remain unobserved. A *chef de cabinet* is accustomed to incidents of this nature, especially during those days which precede or follow great changes in the distribution of offices. Certain ministers, as we know, are very fond of making changes of that kind. He accordingly passed on without raising his eyes, with the discreet reserve of a man of the world who knows his duty, and the serious gravity of the functionary who knows his business, when an involuntary movement of the beautiful unknown made him quickly turn his head. A surprise escaped his lips. It was Iolande! If his eyes had not recognized her, would not his heart have discovered her beneath that veil of black lace which concealed her features?

Yes, it was Iolande, whom he had not seen for four years; but in those four years, what changes had come over that face; how different were now

her gait and her appearance! Those graceful forms, which were then only budding promises, had now developed into bewitching realities. The young girl had changed into the noble lady, unaffected, self-possessed, with a slight haughtiness, a shade of polite impertinence, and with that assurance of gesture and voice which invariably reveals a woman of the great world. Her features were those which require, like certain flowers, to enter into full bloom to show themselves in all their splendor. Her beautiful black hair, raised in a graceful braid over her forehead, formed a most exquisite crown. If her image could no longer gild the dreams of an adolescent, and exalt by its beauty the heart of a novice, she now united in herself all the attractions capable of stirring the imagination of one of those exacting natures who are not satisfied with mere illusions, and who prefer positive reality to beautiful dreams."

In spite of the calm and modest appearance of the marchioness, the slightly heightened color of her face struck Maurice. Our old lover had too jealous an eye not to notice that the arrangement of her shawl had lost that elegant regularity which the maid knows so well how to give in the secret leisure

of the dressing-room. The lips of the pretty marchioness expressed that vague and confused smile which Maurice did not interpret too favorably. Pale, without words, and trembling as if the fault was with him, he bowed and made a step towards her; but the latter coldly noticed the bow, and taking him in with a disdainful look, appeared to think who that subaltern could be who showed himself so importunate with his respects, and passed on with indifference.

"Well," said Maurice to himself, looking after her with a smile through which shone a tear, "I think the minister can very well dispense with my thanks: the injustice seems perfectly explained; but is it thus that first loves always end?" . . . .

A week had hardly passed away when the minister sent for his *chef de cabinet*. The latter found him gravely seated before his desk covered with papers, and in the attitude that a judge might assume towards a prisoner.

"My dear Maurice," kindly remarked his excellency, "I have requested you to come here for the purpose of speaking to you seriously. So listen to me; I shall speak to you as a friend. I have never felt disposed until now to complain of certain imper-

fections that to my very great regret I have observed in your character. You are an intelligent man, without doubt, and in all questions of mere theory I would gladly take the advice of your knowledge and correct judgment. Unfortunately the position that you occupy is not, perhaps, the one that is entirely suited to you. The necessary quality in a *chef de cabinet* is, most of all, tact—let us say it—suppleness; in that you are utterly deficient. In administrative matters you show yourself as strict and dogmatic as you would in a book or a lecture. Your unyielding character and the inflexibility of your principles are out of place, however, when the question is to steer clear of difficulties among so many contrary passions and diverse interests. The absolute is true in mathematics, and it is only true there. In practical life everything is relative, and it is the relative alone which governs the world. A government officer must know how to yield to circumstances, and even to obey them, in order to remain their master; above all must he avoid running rudely against them, for they would surely crush him. In every question it seems as if you do your utmost to propose impossible solutions—the very solutions that I proposed when I was in the

opposition. In everything which relates to offices, your obstinacy does not take into account anything but merit, seniority, or brilliant actions, the same as in a regiment, bringing me into collision with powerful influences which can turn against me and upset the cabinet. Now, the existence of the cabinet is the main interest of the country, since the repose, the grandeur, and the prosperity of the latter depend upon it. Consequently I have thought it my duty, my dear Maurice, to make a painful sacrifice, and choose another *chef de cabinet.* Still, do not allow this to annoy you. Aside from this slight imperfection, I know too well your value not to turn your merits to account in the interest of the government. I have, therefore, reserved for you an important post, where your qualities will better shine forth, while your defects will be less apparent. A place of Referendary to the Council of State is vacant; do you want it?"

From the first word Maurice knew where the blow came from.

"Sir," replied he to his protector, mastering his emotion, "I have conscientiously endeavored always to do my duty. The ideas that I yesterday found detestable I cannot to-day find excellent. I cannot,

in order to please some of your friends or mine, allow them to ride over fifteen or twenty honorable men who are recommended by an extraordinary talent, and by eminent services; in short, I cannot cheat my conscience. That is the reason you have not found in me that suppleness which in your eyes would be a quality, and which in mine would be a vice. Moreover, I should carry the same disposition of mind into any office where you might see fit to place me; allow me, therefore, to decline the appointment, and to prefer to the honors you offer an independence, which will come very easy, considering the simplicity of my tastes, my love of liberty, and the modest income which I have the happiness to enjoy."

In spite of all the efforts of M—— to induce Maurice to change his resolution, the latter remained firm, and left, always apparently devoted and affectionate, but at heart cruelly wounded by his dismissal, and above all at the true cause of it. Being once more his own master, holding henceforth in equal aversion the two parties to which he had been alternately devoted, and of which the exacting vanities, whether personal vanities or vanities of caste, had by turns caused his heart to bleed, he asked himself in what

pleasures he would be able henceforth to find forgetfulness and the repose necessary to his mind and heart. Light literature tempted him but little. Accustomed as he had been to the management of serious matters and substantial interests, he could not make up his mind to engage for the rest of his days in writing scenes in which he had to sacrifice to the prurient taste of the public, by initiating them into the commonplace adventures of some Eulalie or Adelaide, some Auguste or Leonard, with their usual appendages of loves and crimes—thus poisoning the minds of the readers of the circulating libraries, with which Paris and the rest of France are inundated. The thought had already come to him to turn his face sadly towards his former home, and to go back to his old father, when one morning his door suddenly opened, and Captain Edward Auger shot into his room, with as little ceremony as a cannon ball.

XXII.

"HERE I am!" exclaimed the impetuous captain, rushing towards him and pressing his hand with effusion. "You have acted like a man of heart. I know all. It was time, believe me, to break off with the degrading despotism of that camarilla of shopkeepers."

"How," replied Maurice, smiling, "is it you, a hero of July, who thus speaks of the government of July?"

"If you think that it is for these fellows that I fought on the barricades, you are much mistaken."

"And for whom then, I beg of you?"

"For liberty."

"That's so," replied Maurice, smiling, "I forgot." . . .

"Come, complete your work; imitate me."

"I, imitate you! . . . . And in what, if you please?"

"In shouting with me 'Vive la Reforme!' as I formerly shouted 'Vive la Charte!' I have a friend who is the editor of the opposition paper

which has the largest circulation. Shall I introduce you?"

"What paper is it?"

"*Le Patriote.*"

"*Le Patriote?*" exclaimed Maurice; "why that is a republican paper!"

"Well, what of it?"

"And do you go for the republic?"

"I want liberty."

"What kind of liberty?"

"Why, the liberty of choosing myself the government which suits me best."

"That is to say," replied Maurice, "to overthrow all the governments which displease you. Goodness! my liberalism does not go so far as that."

"Logic, young man, logic! Having come back from your royalistic prejudices, you join the constitutional government. Right so. 'Vive la Charte!' Convinced of the mistake of your parliamentary sympathies, you send in your resignation. Right so, again. 'Vive la Reforme!' Now draw your own conclusions." . . .

Maurice, who had grown sour by so many deceptions, inwardly commenced to ask himself if it was then true that sincere and disinterested liberalism

was only a falsehood and a snare. It was a cruel dilemma for his patriotism, to think that this beautiful sentiment was either an empty word, or else that it must have taken refuge in the only party which he did not yet know. He was greatly tempted to go and see. The *Patriote*, moreover, was the best written and the most accredited paper of the democracy. Its popularity did not extend merely to the revolutionary quarters; the bourgeoisie themselves liked to enjoy its spicy articles in order to get over the heavy reading of their own papers. Ably conducted, and written with talent and vigor, it made itself acceptable to the enlightened classes which it knew how to flatter, and which it endeavored to rally to the exaggeration of its ideas by the moderation of its language. The editors passed for honest people, and, what is more, for trustworthy men. They were known to be incapable not only of going into excesses similar to those which dishonored the first Republic, or even of finding excuses for them. Maurice, who was impatient to take up his pen again, and who had already made the acquaintance of several of the writers of the *Patriote*, could not resist very long the entreaties of the captain. He finally yielded, and two or three days after, the

bustling half-pay officer came to announce to him that the matter was all arranged, and that they had nothing further to do but present themselves at the office of the paper.

Cordially received by the chief editor, Maurice found the same courtesy among the other members. The latter, without preoccupying themselves with his antecedents, seemed no more surprised to see him seated near them, at the common editor's table, than a lawyer would be on finding himself in the evening at dinner seated by the side of a brother lawyer, against whom he had in the morning used terms of vituperation and irony. From the very next day he was looked upon as an old acquaintance. The editors of the *Patriote* were almost all very elegant young men, aristocrats to their finger-ends, as aristocratic, and it is considerable to say, in their toilets and in their habits, as they were revolutionary in their style and in their writings. Certainly, when comparing them to his old colleagues of the royalist press, simple, modest, and most all true children of the people, Maurice must often have said to himself that the political opinion of a man is somewhat like his coat;—it neither tells who nor what he is. More than

once, at the hour when fashionable society meets at the Bois de Boulogne, a touching paragraph on the sufferings of the people and the extravagance of the rich was interrupted by the office boy, who called out: "The carriage of Mr. A—— is at the door;" or, "The horse of Mr. X—— is ready." It was after writing some virulent article against the inequality of conditions, against the corrupting influences of money, or after hurling some old fling at the nobility, that our democratic champions bespattered the pedestrians, who probably took them for noblemen, and that they exchanged gracious smiles with the pretty women, whom they happened to meet at the "bois" in their elegant coupés.

Not, certainly, that they were on any terms of intimacy with the ladies of the real aristocracy, but by their exquisite bows to some mock baroness, it was easy to see with what profound reverence their democratic and worldly self-love would have prostrated itself before a genuine duchess. In the evening, when they were seated in all their glory in their boxes at the theatre, the prettiest ballet-dancers and the most charming actresses would embrace the opportunity, while taking breath between two pirouettes, or a rest between two couplets, to offer their

most caressing smiles to these lions of publicity. These terrible slayers of noblemen's rights received complacently the homage of their seducing vassals. By the satisfaction of their smiles, by the naïveté of their protecting airs, one could see that they had as much faith in their power, as a legitimate prince has in his rights to the throne.

"Can it be possible," thought Maurice, "that the democracy has also its aristocrats? Why! they look very much like the others. . . . Only they know better how to make the poor people feel their superiority."

Still, it was not this thought that prevented him from following his colleagues in their pleasures. A circumstance, entirely personal, kept him from their amusements and their elegant fêtes.

XXIII.

At the time when Maurice wrote for the theatre, he had known a poor musician, who, with his violin under his arm, ran about from house to house during the day to give lessons, and for sixty francs a month devoted his evenings to the orchestra of the Vaudeville. He was a dapper little man, quick and alert in spite of his bald head and his sixty years; strong-limbed, warm-hearted, always cheerful, forgetting the griefs of yesterday, disdainful of the threats of to-morrow, untiring in hope, and tenacious to his fancies, and who believed himself for a whole day long a millionaire, after dreaming at night that he was engaged at the Théâtre-Italien or the Opera; —the perfect embodiment of the enthusiastic, seedy-looking artist, always unfortunate and never discouraged. All the habitués of the green-room liked him for his good-humor, his courage and simplicity. The poor fellow had been married; his wife was a chorus singer at the Opéra-Comique, who died on giving birth to a little girl, who was all he had left on earth to love. He lived, he toiled,

he suffered for her. She was the only joy of his life, as his old instrument, which faithfully earned for him his daily bread, was his only pride. He took upon himself the charge of rearing and instructing her; to no one else he would have entrusted this tender and precious burden. He had taught her reading, writing, spelling, the four rules of arithmetic, music, and drawing. Of the catechism even, and of higher literature, he had taught her nearly all he knew himself, which was not much to boast of. In order to complete the literary and moral education of his dear Adeline, he took her every evening to the theatre, where he was obliged himself to go, and where she could not fail, according to his opinion, to form her taste and her heart, while applauding with her little hands the masterpieces of the day.

Maurice had taken a lively interest in this strange family, with honest hearts but ill-directed minds, this Bohemian paternity, this gayly-supported misery. He had even been able, within the range of his own resources, to delicately render them some service. Later, when appointed *chef de cabinet*, he had tried to find for the old violin-player a modest but permanent position, which would insure to the improvi-

dent artist bread for his old days, when the poor man, tired most likely with waiting for fortune to come, happened to die. With his bow in hand he died suddenly, while giving a lesson to his last and only scholar; and Adeline remained an orphan at seventeen years, with no other inheritance than her father's old violin.

Maurice had felt too sincere an interest in the parent not to bestow upon the child a portion of his affection. His influence would have enabled him to obtain for her some small place in a public office where women are employed, but he dared not propose to drag her down to the common labor of the workshops, and she was totally incapable, at her age, to fulfil the duties of a more responsible position. Alone, without resources, unable to work with her hands to earn a livelihood, and exposed to the most dangerous seductions of Paris, her protector trembled for her. He felt it his duty, in remembering his friendship for the unfortunate musician, to protect the youth and beauty of the poor girl from the pressing temptations of misery and hunger. He accordingly furnished for her, at his own expense, a modest attic, and took upon himself the charge of providing for her slender existence.

As long as he remained absorbed in the labors of the ministerial cabinet, he rarely saw her; it was with difficulty that he found time each week to devote an hour or two to this interesting orphan, whom he always found in solitude and in tears. Finding himself more at liberty after his resignation, isolated and discouraged in his turn, his visits became more frequent.

Adeline was a graceful and charming little blonde, with thick and silky hair, a sweet, childlike face, and with large black eyes which betrayed an indefinable expression of dreamy melancholy. Maurice attributed this sadness to the sufferings of her early years, to the suppression of all the delicate instincts and of all the elegant tastes of the young girl, obliged to struggle with the grievous exigencies of a needy existence. That tendency to romantic reveries was naturally explained to him by the influence of an incomplete education and badly-selected reading. The lessons of her father, the aversion of the good man for any healthy and well-regulated existence, together with his dreams, which were in perpetual discord with reality, had developed in her without doubt that exaltation of language and that sentimental imagination, which, in the end, he

thought, would yield to example and the advice of a tender friendship.

From day to day the relations became more intimate between these young people. Affectionate devotion from the one, sweet gratitude from the other, such were the elements of a friendship which could not fail in time to turn into a sincere and ardent attachment.

During six months, life glided on for our two lovers like a gently flowing rivulet that meets no obstacle in its course. Maurice, who had been crushed in his love, his pride, his ambition, and whose heart yet bled from this triple wound, felt all the springs of his soul gently unbend under the grateful influence of a mutual affection. His heart already built the most poetic castles in Spain upon this charming attachment. He was anxious to consecrate it by an early marriage. Could he be guilty of playing the same odious part to the poor Adeline that Mademoiselle de Brugal had played to him, and from a sentiment of vanity repulse the happiness thus thrown in his way?

All the bitterness of the past was effaced from his heart, overflowing as it was with the joys of the present. Precisely at four, while his friends, the

Puritans of the *Patriote*, went displaying their horses and equipages at the Bois de Boulogne or the Champs Elysées, he hastened straightway to his Adeline. In the evening he accompanied her to the theatre, unless they preferred to remain quietly at home. Adeline, brought up as she had been, enjoyed above all things the theatre; she knew all the actors of Paris by their names, and went into raptures over their talents—which she saw fit to call genius,—and inwardly associated herself with their triumphs, as if they were all one family. It was particularly at the small theatres of the boulevards that she liked to spend her evenings. There she wept, sobbed, and cursed the traitor with rage. Hardly had she taken her seat in front of the stage, than her early nature began to show itself, and the blood of the old musician resumed its natural sway. Maurice paid but little attention to these childish demonstrations; he had placed in her all his confidence as well as all his tenderness, and even his purse had no more secrets than his heart for his future wife. She governed her little house, chose, directed, and dismissed at her own pleasure her servants, regulated all the expenses, kept carefully her keys, and did things so well, that her slave

adored his chain—chain of flowers, it is true, and held in a light hand.

Whenever Maurice came, he always found Adeline waiting for him with a tender impatience One day, for the first time since she kept house, he left the office before the accustomed hour, and calling there, found she was not at home. Two or three times, during the following days, these absences were repeated. He did not, however, take much notice of it; but she, with such an awkward eagerness endeavored to make an explanation before one had been demanded of her, that any one less blind than Maurice would surely have conceived some suspicion. More and more absent and preoccupied, her eyes seemed to look in one direction, while her heart was in another. Fortunately for her, Maurice's love was too sincere to notice it. Had he the right, besides, to doubt the poor child? and these absences, were they not the most natural thing in the world?

But what astonished him more, was the rapid manner with which she seemed to dispose of her small allowance. Her household expenses had not increased, nor was this unaccountable prodigality justified by any extravagance in toilet or furniture He thought it would be sufficient to gently advise

the young girl to use more reserve and economy, but the difficulty, far from diminishing, became worse, so much so that Maurice began to suspect the people in the house. He was on the point of taking some severe measures, when one day, calling in her absence, and without any suspicion opening a secret drawer to look for something which had been mislaid, he put his hand on a small package of letters, which, slipping from their cover, fell open at his feet. Mechanically he cast a rapid glance over the first one he took up, and bounded, like a deer stung by a snake, at the reading of the following sentence which struck his eyes:

"Nightly, oh! my angel, before the silent and glittering throng who listen to me from their boxes, before that noble and enthusiastic people of the Parisian faubourgs who applaud me, I see only you, you alone. You are my perfume, my faith, my existence! To-morrow, then, oh sainted and beautiful madonna! If I have not yet returned from the rehearsal, you will find the key with the concierge."

With a crisped hand, he opened the second letter and read:

"You are noble, Adeline; you are pure, you are an angel. Oh! how often I have wished to take you by the hand and lead you through the solitary and sombre arches of some temple at the hour when the majestic peals of the organ cause the great painted windows to tremble, and there, kneeling by your side, implore —Heaven, bless our love!" . . . .

Another:

"My poor Adeline, I am in a terrible situation. It is dishonor, it is death! The treasurer of our theatre has already advanced me three months of my salary; I cannot borrow any more from him and I am hunted down for one unfortunate note of three hundred francs. Oh, misery! to be emperor and king, and unable to pay one's rent! Oh Sophocles! Oh Shakespeare! Oh Corneille! If you, dearest, could lend me for a few days that little sum, we could add to it all those I owe you already, and you will oblige for life your devoted slave." . . . .

Maurice stopped there.

The absences of Adeline, her romantic reveries, her secret expenses, all were at last explained. But how can we prevent little ducks from dabbling in the mud! The daughter of the poor and artless musician allowed herself to be drained of every cent, like a sentimental fool, by some stupid coxcomb of the stage.

Henceforth Maurice carried in his heart the image of the romantic Adeline as the counterpart of the noble Iolande de Brugal.

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Shortly after broke out the revolution of February. Louis Philippe abdicated, and the Republic was victorious. The latter, however, was not destined to

last long. Maurice, who had remained true to his political convictions, and been gravely compromised as a radical writer, not only in the *Patriote*, but still more so in a paper which was devoted to the interests of the working classes, felt no longer safe in Paris under the new régime; and utterly disgusted with politics, and society at large, he bade adieu to the capital, and left one evening by the express train for the scenes of his early home.

PART THIRD.

MIONETTE.

PART THIRD.

MIONETTE.

I.

MAURICE had left the South with all the illusions, enthusiasm, and confiding ardor of a young man of twenty years; he returned matured by experience, discouraged by deceptions, and saddened by reality. It was the medium in which he had lived, the corruptions of Paris, the vanities, the ambition, the eager cupidities that besiege one there, which he decried as the causes of his grievous deceptions and his disgust with the world and with life. Under the influence of the thousand remembrances of childhood which rushed to his memory, he felt, as he approached his native country, that his ideas wandered in an entirely new direction. His countenance resumed something of its former animation; the old smile returned to his lips, and calmness to his brow. He experienced, at the sight of the

cheerful landscape through which he passed, the sentiment of the traveller of La Bruyère, who, on seeing his little village, exclaimed, "What a pleasure to live under so beautiful a sky and in so enchanting a spot!" On finding himself again in that beloved country, which appealed to the heart of the man through the tender voice of childhood, and where he sought in vain for so many friends who were gone forever, he experienced a feeling of secret bitterness and at the same time a sweet contentment which it would be difficult to describe. At the thought of his now sainted mother, his eyes moistened with tears. How many of us have ever experienced the profound sadness which attends a return to the deserted home!

I leave you to guess the feelings of Maurice at his first interview with his father. The latter had only grown a little older in outward appearance; as to his mind, that was always active, always young. He pressed his son to his heart with tenderness, and showed him with pride his alembics, furnaces, and retorts, the instruments of his experiments and the results of his discoveries. As to the labors of Maurice in Paris, they were not alluded to. The old man obstinately avoided the subject. Immovable in his logic, unalterable in his course, he could not have

spoken without bitterness of the errors of his son, and he would not mar the joy of his return by retrospective reproaches. Vernier had already passed his seventieth year. It was plain, therefore, that Maurice's duty henceforth should be to devote himself entirely to that lonely and laborious old man; and he firmly resolved to pay back with interest his hitherto neglected debt of filial love.

Already two or three months had passed away in a sort of busy idleness. The cares he lavished on his father, the visits he made to old acquaintances, his little excursions to the property left him by his mother, and which had been so long neglected, absorbed all his time. The monotony of such a quiet existence must finally end, however, in becoming irksome to one of so active a mind. The unceasing labors to which his father so closely applied himself condemned Maurice to the weariness of an almost perpetual solitude. The latter did not sigh for Paris, that was very sure; but he would have liked to see a few more people in the house. He began to fear for the results of this idle life, when one day they received a visit from an old friend, who had always expressed the greatest friendship for both his father and himself.

The worthy man Plantade was an old soap-manufacturer from Marseilles, who, by his quick gesture, sonorous voice, and somewhat boisterous good nature revealed the genuine Provençal. Since he had retired from business, he lived on an estate which he had recently bought in the neighborhood of the Vernier property.

"Well, my young friend," said the worthy bourgeois to Maurice, "without spending time in circumlocutions or periphrases, here you are, and I suppose will remain in these parts. Now you must begin to think of finishing up here."

"Finishing up?"

"This place is not inhabitable, believe me, if one has not his little horse, his little carriage, his little house, his little estate, and his little wife. You have the little horse, the little house, the little carriage." . . .

"Can it be that you have already found me the little wife?" gayly interrupted Maurice, quite pleased with the words of the good man which went straight to his heart, for since his return to the country, and in his solitary home, the idea of marriage had more than once crossed his mind.

"Yes, my child; a magnificent one! Education,

character, musical talent, religion, and two hundred thousand francs. A young lady with two hundred thousand francs is a rare bird." . . .

"Above all when she is pretty! Your protégé, is she a nice girl?"

"Adorable, lively, graceful, blonde. . . ."

"You will not take offence, I hope, if I should like to know her before closing the bargain?"

"You will see her, you will see her; and if you do not fall in love with her at first sight. . . . But let us talk about yourself first. What is the exact amount of your fortune?"

"From ten to twelve thousand francs income."

"Well, that is nice enough."

"Add to it the eight or ten thousand francs from my father, which must eventually come to my children."

"Oh! eight or ten," repeated the friend of the elder Vernier, shaking his head with an air of sadness and doubt. "Never mind, you are as good as she, and I will set to work."

At heart Maurice was charmed with the proposition made him. If life in the country did not altogether displease him, he nevertheless acknowledged that absolute solitude was not the most agree-

able thing in the world. The love of an amiable and devoted wife, the prattle of the joyful little ones who would climb upon his knee, the smiling prospect of a family circle, with its preoccupations and its joys, appeared already to his charmed imagination, and gave a brilliant glow to the monotony of a country home. It was necessary, therefore, to shape his existence for some serious end—the happiness of those beings whom God might confide to his keeping. He also pictured to himself, in a most attractive light, the young girl who was to become his wife. He fancied she was, without any doubt, an artless and loving child, brought up far from the noise and vanities of the world, simple, tender, pure, etc., etc.,—the customary litany of qualities invariably attributed to every young girl about to marry—precious vase, which does not exhale its perfume to the poisoned breath of the world. What a contrast to the haughty and designing women whom he had known in Paris, already suspected at twenty, hypocritical courtesans at thirty, for whom marriage is only a halt, prompted by interest, and made between the romantic loves of yesterday and the designing intrigues of to-morrow. Chosen from the class to which he himself belonged, his wife would naturally

share all his tastes and habits. Thereupon he built a thousand poetic castles in the air, and believed himself already desperately in love with the young girl, whom, up to that moment, he had not even seen.

At the end of a week, his obliging old friend again made his appearance.

"Well?" he inquired, with curiosity.

"Well!" answered the other, whose humiliated air and confused accent betrayed his disappointment. "Of no use! Don't be offended, though. It is not you they find fault with. Heavens! sons-in-law of your calibre, intellectual, highly educated, honest, are not caught every day in our waters." . .

"What then is the obstacle?"

"It is your fortune."

"My fortune?"

"Or, rather, no; it is not precisely yours, my friend, but that of your very dear and very honored father. He has debts, they say. You understand that a young lady with two! hundred! thousand! francs does not give herself away for nothing."

"Well! never mind, we will talk no more about it," replied Maurice, feeling more pained to see himself thus bargained for than afflicted by the diminution of his fortune.

"You are right; we will talk no more about it. Besides, when I come to think, I have another who I am sure will exactly suit you."

"Another?" interrupted Maurice, smiling. "Ah, my good old Plantade, you are then the Providence of the disposable young girls and old bachelors?"

"Well!" said the good man, "the one I propose now is not as rich as the other, but just as good as regards family. As to face, character, figure, I would prefer, for my part, the second. She is tall, with an aristocratic air, brilliant eyes, lips like cherries—a sweet, sensible brunette."

"Well!" exclaimed Maurice, with a new smile. "Let us go in for the cherries! I do not feel particularly disposed to marry the highest bidder."

The young person described to Maurice was, in reality, equal in all respects to the first one. In the town, the two families shared the same social position, and enjoyed the same personal consideration. Only the fortune of the pretty brunette was inferior by half to that of the blonde, and established naturally between them, in the commercial minds of their compatriots, a distinct line of demarcation. This well-established inferiority, as far as fortune was concerned, of Mademoiselle Léonie

Cabassol, one would say ought to lead to an equivalent reduction in the pretensions of the family. Only a few days had passed, however, when the officious matrimonial agent appeared again, more embarrassed, more confused, than on the first occasion.

"I see it by your face, my dear ambassador," cheerfully exclaimed Maurice, guessing the answer by the piteous air of the old man; "I see it by your face, no luck again."

"Eh! sacrebleu," grumbled the Provençal, "it is no fault of mine. They now say that your father is entirely ruined, that he has not a penny left."

"He has my fortune, anyhow," replied Maurice, with emotion.

"Oh! do not get angry, please. In the refusal of these good Cabassols there is nothing to wound the pride, neither of yourself nor of your excellent and respected father. They consider my old friend Vernier as the most irreproachable, distinguished, and honorable man of the department; upon you they have lavished every eulogium. Only they hope to marry their daughter to Renard, the son of the banker. He has more than a million, you know."

"How! to the son of that infamous village usurer,

who was once arrested for some fraudulent transaction?"

"He was acquitted. Besides he is dead, and the son is not responsible for the faults of his father."

"Certainly not," said Maurice; "quite the contrary!"

"Anyhow, don't worry. I have promised to marry you, and marry you I will. Stop! I know a young lady, less rich, it is true—a simple girl, with fifty thousand francs, but amiable, good, modest, prettier still than the other two. And such eyes! you would say of velvet; and teeth! they are like pearls; a complexion! as snow; and hair! like waves of gold."

"My dear Plantade," interrupted Maurice, seizing his hand, "I thank you for all the trouble you have taken upon yourself on my account, but I implore of you to cease all further efforts. I have had enough of this traffic in human flesh—we come out pretty much like negroes—and I must confess that I do not fancy the idea of being thus knocked down at auction. Besides, these marriages concluded like commercial operations, without reference to any previous acquaintance, without any mutual esteem or preëxisting sympathy, have always been repug-

nant to me. Decidedly I am too honest a man to marry on such conditions; and since I have neither debts to liquidate, nor rheumatism to nurse, nor a position to be paid for with the fortune of my wife, I will reserve for myself the privilege of a choice."

"To think, though," he said to himself, when he was alone, that I was simple enough to imagine I might find in this part of the world the disinterestedness of the golden age, and the simplicity of primitive life!"

II.

The good old man Plantade had in no way exaggerated the bad state of affairs of the honest and learned chemist. How the father of Maurice had become so impoverished, how he had managed to get rid of his fortune during a life so discreet and quiet, was a question which his friends were unable to explain; but is it not always so with people who have lost their money? And still the cause of his ruin was easy to discover. During more than thirty years, he had procured at any price the most expensive instruments for his favorite science. There was no experiment he recoiled from, whatever might have been the sacrifice of money it involved. I have already alluded to his charities. He could not bear that at the close of his life the poor in his charge should suffer from his present embarrassment, and as his resources diminished, he continued his alms the same as formerly. His love of celebrity, the absorbing obstinacy in the pursuit of his labors, and his disdain for everything which related to the material details of his existence, were

by no means conducive to a very strict economy in his household affairs. It was in this way that his expenses habitually exceeded his income, and the day would surely come when, the water running no longer to the river and the river always flowing on, it must in the end become dry. The disaster of the old man Vernier was as complete as it was honorable. Was it not by assisting the unfortunate that he had expended a great portion of his patrimony? And if vanity and the desire to shine had at times too much influenced his conduct, had he not, by devoting himself to labors for which he refused remuneration, and in diffusing gratuitously the results of his useful inventions, obeyed a higher and nobler ambition—the ambition of serving his country and his fellow-beings?

A more serious cause of uneasiness came soon to increase the sadness of Maurice. The health of his father, until then firm and flourishing, appeared all of a sudden to fail. It was an indescribable uneasiness, a feverish agitation, which the physicians were unable to define. Maurice redoubled his cares and attentions, but in vain; the strength of the obstinate chemist gave out in the midst of his labors. The ungrateful silence with which his

name had been latterly treated by the public, who had turned their attention toward younger reputations and more recent discoveries, afflicted him bitterly. This need of a stirring existence, of notoriety and popularity, which had been the joy of his youth, became the torment of his old age. His robust constitution gradually yielded to the damage caused by time; the fortress from hour to hour became dismantled, and stone after stone fell away from the ruins. The day at last arrived when he was compelled to go to his bed never to leave it again.

One evening he called Maurice to his side and expressed the wish to remain alone with him.

"My son," he said, with an expression of profound tenderness, "I feel that my last hour is approaching. God is my witness that you have had all my thoughts, all my affection. It is to you—to your future, that my existence has been entirely consecrated; it is for you alone that I have never stopped a moment, during my long career, these laborious studies which have brought me honors and celebrity. I might have directed my activity towards more obscure and more lucrative labors. But my ambition had a higher aim. I have desired to render illustrious, while keeping it respected, the name you

have received from me. Thank God, I have succeeded. You will doubtless find your inheritance greatly diminished; I shall not be able to leave you as large a fortune as was left me by my poor father; but, after all, of what consequence is money, my dear son? You will not be rich, but you will be distinguished."

Maurice fell into his arms, imploring him to cease this conversation, protesting that money was nothing to him, and a name still less, the affection of his dear parent being the only inheritance he desired. He spoke to the old man of the re-establishment of his health, and of the long and happy days they would yet pass together; but the latter only sadly shook his head and embraced him anew.

"No," he said, "it is all over; I feel I am going. You will gather the harvest I have sown. In the great consideration with which you will be treated by the world, you will find, my son, the reward of my disinterested life. If you wish to marry, you will see how readily an alliance will be sought by the most honored families of the country. Will not parents prefer for their daughters the honor of a name without a stain, to the vulgar enjoyment of fortune? If you wish to enter into any public office,

the renown of your father will throw open to you every door. Does a government ever allow itself to be dazzled by the moneyed position of its candidates, and does it not always recompense merit and virtue? At the expense of your fortune, I will have made your happiness."

Three days later, he breathed his last in the arms of the sad and weeping Maurice.

"Good God," cried he, falling on his knees before the body of his father, whose icy hand he pressed in his own, "may he rest as peacefully in death as in life! On this earth, he has believed in the success of merit, the reward of labor and knowledge, in the triumph of honesty; in this belief he has been happy. I beseech thee, O God, in the realms of eternal truth, prolong for him the illusion!"

The elder Vernier left his affairs extremely embarrassed. Not only was his entire patrimony spent, but his debts were large enough to absorb even more than the fortune of his son.

Maurice, whose knowledge of the law had been but little called into practice, and the excess of his grief also rendering him incapable of any other thought, would have, in accepting his inheritance,

plunged himself into certain misery but for the kindly assistance of the old family notary, who came just in time to save him from trouble. Following the counsels of the latter, he abandoned to the creditors the entire property of his father, besides giving up his own, only reserving for himself such a portion as was absolutely necessary for his existence. He had inherited from his mother a small farm, which was worth some sixty thousand francs. With the exception of that simple home, the birthplace of his ancestors, the birthplace of his mother, and rendered sacred to him by all the souvenirs which it recalled, he retained nothing of his former fortune. Reduced henceforth to content himself with a revenue of barely three thousand francs, he who had always lived in affluence, almost in luxury, he did not deliberate very long as to the manner in which he must act. To return to Paris, there to live in privation, rendered more cruel by the remembrance of his former pleasures, was impossible; he did not think of it, and he firmly resolved to live in the country and upon the income of his farm.

III.

Such was the often-interrupted narrative of the monk of Franquevaux. Has it offered to the reader the same interest that it has to me? The tone, the accent, the physiognomy of the speaker, the contrast of the brilliant scenes where these incidents occurred with the melancholy solitude where they were related, the presence by my side of the principal actor himself, lent a charm to these interesting conversations which I fear I have only disfigured by endeavoring to weave them together. In listening to Maurice, it was clear that he had been the hero of the drama or the comedy, and that he had alternately smiled, wept, and suffered from all those details which my pen has been so inadequate to describe.

Thanks to the cordial hospitality of the monk, I enjoyed extremely his seclusion. Little by little I accustomed myself with an inexpressible pleasure to this existence, at the same time uniform and varied, indolent and active, and of which some new singularity was each day revealed to me. Thus, one

morning, having risen later than usual, I sought in vain for my host. Contrary to his usual habit, he had gone out without warning me.

"The master is out sowing," replied the pretty Arlesienne servant in answer to my questions concerning him.

I quickly directed my steps towards the field indicated. From afar I saw the monk of Franquevaux walking with long strides, slow and regular as the movement of a pendulum, through his ploughed land. By turns he thrust his two hands into a large bag hung around his neck, and drew them out filled with grain, which he scattered equally right and left over the half-opened furrows with all the solicitude of a mother who distributes, at the hour of their repast, an equal portion to each of her children.

"Ha, ha!" he exclaimed, laughing, the moment he recognized me; "you did not expect to find me at this business?"

"To tell the truth, I supposed you merely directed the work on your farm."

"You are nearly right; I let the men attend to the ploughing, pruning, and all preparatory work; but the vintage and the harvest I have done under

my own eyes. As to the sowing, I do not yield to any one the privilege of committing to the earth the wheat that is to become my bread. It is a filial homage which I owe and render to our common mother."

The variations of the temperature are sudden in November, and bad weather rapidly succeeds fine days. The sun, which until then had been radiant, became suddenly obscured by clouds; we heard the sea-winds moan through the high trees, and the rain, which came down in torrents, held us prisoners at home. It seemed an excellent opportunity to demand of my host the remainder of his narrative.

It was one of those damp days, when the clouds roll and toss the one over the other like winged waves. Beneath the window of Maurice's study, where we were shut in, extended, as far as the eye could reach, the marshes enveloped in a thick mist, which rose from the earth towards the sky, blending the two elements in the same gloom and the same fog. The rain beat against the windows, and striped with threads of silver the sombre depths of the horizon. A clear and sparkling fire blazed in the chimney before which we were both seated, buried in the huge arm-chairs that had so charmed me on

my arrival. A Christmas eve could not have been more favorable for the confidence of my host. He seemed to understand it, and without requiring too much urging, he continued his history as follows.

IV.

My slender domain had been leased by a worthy man whose father and grandfather had lived before him on the old family farm. The modest income which I received from it was not sufficient for my support. If I expected to live from the revenue of my land, it was absolutely necessary for me to work it myself, and to husband those thousand little resources which have no direct money value, though very important in themselves, and which the most humble farm offers to the one who lives upon it. I experienced a great repugnance in sending away the honest and devoted servant of my family, well understanding the bitter grief which this kind of exile would bring upon his old age. He was born in that house, and had been married there. All his joys and sufferings he had there felt. It was in that room, in the bed where he slept, he had seen his father, mother, and wife, all die. He now remained alone on this farm, deprived of so much he had loved, with a daughter of seventeen or eighteen years, the last and only object of his tenderness. This corner of

the earth, where I had never put my foot ten times in my life, was endeared to him by the remembrance of the tears he had shed there and the joys and happiness he had there tasted. He had made it his own, so to speak, by his patient labors at all hours, by toilsome sweats, and by the affection which attached him to the place where he had lived and hoped to die. And yet for what purpose had I reserved this farm, if without any advantage to myself; and for what reason had I kept it away from my father's creditors, if its possession did not insure my support? I felt, therefore, obliged to inform the good old Laurent of my situation. My letter, as affectionate as possible, conveyed to him the true condition of my affairs, the impossibility for us both to live from so small a place, and the sincere regret I felt in giving him this notice. In short, I endeavored to smooth as much as I could, by the cordiality of my expressions, the harshness of a measure which was unavoidable and, perhaps, more painful to me, who had to resort to it, than for him who was the object of it.

The day Laurent left the farm I went there toward evening. The sun gilded the country with its dying rays. Not a noise disturbed the ground,

not a breath stirred the air. At rare intervals the silence was interrupted by the warbling of some bird perched on the top of an almond tree. Never had a beautiful day so sweet a decline. The mute harmony of nature, the majestic melancholy of the setting sun, the soft transparency of the air, the sight of the sea and marshes glowing like fire in the horizon, involuntarily inclined my soul to reverie, and as I wound my way along, I became more and more lost in feelings of admiration and sadness.

A short distance from my poor habitation, I recognized Laurent, who seemed to come in my direction. He was seated in a little cart, his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands, his eyes fixed on the ground and apparently motionless. Sometimes he turned to throw stealthily through the trees a sad look toward the farm-house from the chimney of which the smoke was yet curling. The little cart moved sadly and slowly; there was something in its progress almost funereal. The whip no longer snapped, neither did Laurent stir with his voice the lazy mule. As far as he was concerned it only moved too quickly, that wagon which carried him away from his native home and table, where he had sat with his friends to enjoy his happy wedding

repast, the bed where his wife had died, and the cradle where, for the first time, his child had smiled upon him in its innocence.

I dared not show myself at this moment, and concealed behind a grove of green oaks at the side of the road, I let the old man pass. Some hundred yards behind, came his daughter. She led by the bridle a donkey loaded with kitchen utensils; but the obstinate animal, pulling the halter every little while, refused to go on, and resisted its guide, who exhausted herself in vain efforts.

"Hie! my good Martine, hie! my old pet," said the poor child, with more pity than anger in her tone. "We must obey when the masters command." . .

I had never seen Mionette, who was born and had grown up during my stay in Paris. And now, looking upon her for the first time, I was struck by her pure and serene beauty. To her, I was only a stranger. The same reasons, however, which prevented me from being seen by her father, did not extend to her. So I thought I might venture to say a few words.

"My child," I said, "let me lend you some of my strength; my arm is more vigorous than yours, and

is better able to correct and subdue this wicked beast."

"Wicked?" quickly repeated the young girl. "No, sir; Martine is the most sober and honest donkey in the whole country; only she does not like to leave her stable. . . . Alas!" she added, opening upon me her large eyes, sweet and frank, with an expression of resigned sadness which impressed me, "where we are born, people or animals, we like to die."

Wishing to continue the conversation, I found some pretext to retrace my steps, and I walked along with her. Mionette ingenuously related all her troubles and those of her father without allowing a word of reproach against the author of them to escape her lips. If she was unfortunate, was not the proprietor of the farm still more so?

"I do not know him," she said, "but my father has often spoken of the kindness of his family toward us. Is it not just, when the rich and happy masters have shown themselves kind and affectionate toward their servants, that the servants in their turn should prove devoted and grateful to their masters when they meet with misfortunes and become poor?"

You can guess my emotion. This hereditary and disinterested devotion, the sincerity of this artless affection, this simplicity of sentiment and language touched my heart; tears filled my eyes. I had not the strength to contain myself any longer.

"Mionette," I said, taking her hands in mine, which she withdrew with a feeling of frightened modesty, "you are a good and honest girl, and I owe to you in my misfortune one of the sweetest moments of my life. I am Maurice Vernier."

At these words she remained stupefied, speechless, her eyes gazing into mine with a restless astonishment, and stammering a few unintelligible words which sounded like excuses, while I ought to have thanked her from the very depths of my soul for the joy which she poured into my heart, weaned since so long a time from every fresh and honest emotion. Finally, overcoming her confusion, she smiled, held out her hand to me, and with a trembling voice:

"Father! dear father!" she called, "here is Mr. Vernier. Come, he is here. Dear father." . . . .

But before even the old man could turn his head, I had disappeared behind the trees among the vines which clustered by the roadside.

V.

I was no sooner established on my farm than I resolutely commenced my new existence, and set to work without losing time. It was with some misgivings though, I am forced to confess, that I made up my mind to do so. In spite of my strength of will, I sometimes was afraid that the solitude would prove too wearisome for me. During the first few weeks the time passed quickly enough, and I attributed to the charm of novelty the pleasure I took in country work. Little by little, however, it seemed to me, I found a more genuine charm in this existence, which contrasted so singularly with my past life. My house was not so comfortable then as it is to-day, and my farm in no way resembled the one I now occupy. After a day entirely employed in superintending my men, studying the nature of the soil, and the best mode to make it productive, sometimes even handling the spade for a while, —when in the evening I found myself alone in my little whitewashed room, the fatigue which overpowered me made me forget the privations to

which my mind was condemned. For my society, I was reduced to two ploughmen, I, who during so long a time had passed my evenings in the midst of the most brilliant intellects of Paris. The mute contemplation of nature at rest, the silent harmony of our beautiful starry nights, the magnificence of the calm and serene immensity which surrounded me, the sweetness until then unknown of the refreshing sleep which follows a day of labor in the fields, compensated for the absence of Parisian salons and gayety.

During the first months of my stay, the old Laurent spared neither his time nor his advice. He experienced a bitter pleasure to come and see me at the farm, and there to revive some old recollections. Born on my little piece of land, he knew and taught me, in every detail, the arid spots and the most fertile places. His daughter often accompanied him; both expressed for me a sincere attachment. Laurent, who remembered with pride having driven my mother's carriage, grieved over my poverty. As to Mionette, if she did not express so frankly her tender compassion, her eyes spoke for her, and the sympathy that my misfortunes inspired I could read in her sweet and profound look. I felt that I had but

to say the word, and she would come to serve me and take the charge of my house. I was certain her father would not have hesitated to intrust her to my care; but, in addition to his requiring the services of his daughter himself, I would have scrupled to expose the poor child, even in the most innocent manner, to mischievous suspicions and malicious gossip.

At the end of six months I had a thorough knowledge of the ground I had to cultivate. I could, therefore, feel satisfied with directing the work without subjecting myself any longer to the annoyance of a constant supervision. Already I had resorted to my gun for recreation; I now used it more frequently. I spent the greater part of my days hunting, sometimes for the red partridge, which are so plenty on our hills, sometimes in the marshes and salt meadows, in search of snipe and other waterfowl. On these excursions I frequently met Mionette, and exchanged each time a few words with her.

"Mionette," I said one day, "tell me honestly; do you really regret the humble roof of my farm?"

"The swallow," she sweetly replied, "always remembers its nest."

"And you undoubtedly hold it against him who has turned you out."

"I hold it against you!" she exclaimed with an emotion which I involuntarily shared. "What right would I have to do so? To be compelled to live there, sad and alone, is it not a more cruel necessity for you, than for us to leave it?"

Meetings of this kind occurred quite often. It would seem as if Mionette, whom I had objected to taking into my service, sought the opportunity, since she could not make herself useful to me in the house, to make up for it by doing something for my benefit outside. When hunting, I frequently saw her running, excited and quite out of breath:

"Sir, the partridges are in this vineyard; come this way!"

At another time:

"Sir, the hare has hiddden under these bushes."

And her eyes beamed with joy at the idea of being able to procure some pleasure for me.

Shall I say it? Dare I venture to lay plainly before you the infirmities of my soul? I began to feel uneasy at this eagerness on her part to serve me. My numerous deceptions in life had awakened my distrust. I was in that strange and painful situation of a man who wants to believe and who doubts, who would wish to give himself up to the good instincts

of his heart, and who fears to be the dupe of it. My sad experience of the world had taught me to seek always a deceitful calculation beneath an honest word or a good action. The seemingly ingenuous affection of this young girl, might it not after all be only a selfish falsehood, which concealed some snare? This melancholy thought so took possession of my mind that I resolved to put an end to our interviews. My heart had already played me too many tricks in life. Under the poetic influence of solitude, of the pure air of the fields, and the beauty of Mionette, I was afraid of some new caprice, and at the idea of being once more victimized, my pride revolted. I no longer frequented the places where I was in the habit of going, and I did not see her again for two or three weeks. Finally one day I espied her at a distance, seated by the side of a ditch, her form bent forward, her head leaning in a melancholy manner in her hands, and with a dreamy, wandering expression. On seeing me she jumped up and came eagerly towards me.

"Where have you been hunting for the last month?" she asked with a trembling voice and tearful eyes. "Where have you been I have not seen you once, and yet I have never left for a single

day these hills you so much like." Equally affected, I avoided answering her questions, assuming a coldness and indifference in order to conceal my confusion, and I went away leaving her alone, sad, and in tears.

VI.

About this time, in order to completely discourage by my absence any calculations or illusions which might possibly have formed in her mind, I conceived the project of spending a short time in the Camargue. It was in 1856, in the beginning of the month of May. The spring, on my farm, which does not produce forage, is the dead season. The only work the soil requires at that period is the spading of the vineyards. I availed myself of the opportunity, and having taken proper information of my faithful Laurent, I crossed the bridge of Saint-Gilles.

For several days the weather had been horrible, a mixture of furious winds and deluging rains. The tempest roared over the sea, and the marshes of the Camargue. The waters of the Rhône rose higher and higher, and all the game had taken refuge in the interior of the island, there to seek for shelter. I made my headquarters in a farm situated on the bank of the lesser Rhône, which Laurent had recommended to me; going out every morning

with my dog and gun, to search the country for game. The farm of Rigaudon, that was its name, is built on the slope of a dyke. The entrance door faces the south; the windows of the second floor open towards the north, on the Rhône, and on the other side upon the plain. The abundance of game kept me, in spite of the bad weather, far beyond the time I had assigned for my little excursion, and the 31st of May yet found me in the Camargue.

That day—the date will never be effaced from my memory—I went out hunting, as usual. During the preceding night the Rhône had prodigiously swollen, and since morning the sea wind raged with an extraordinary violence. I met several herdsmen hurriedly bringing back their cattle to the stable, and some farm hands who came in great haste to carry into their barns the working implements which they were in the habit of leaving over night in the fields. As I asked them the cause of this eagerness and alarm, they shook their heads in distress, and, motioning from the south to the north, they pointed with a frightened look to the struggle of the wind against the water, driving the latter back to its source. The horses and cattle, sniffing the humid air with dilated nostrils, and turning towards the south,

neighed or bellowed with fright. The birds flew wildly about, uttering long, plaintive cries, and looking from on high upon this furious war of the elements, exposed themselves to the aim of the hunter with an indifference which was ominous, since nothing but the instinct of some approaching danger could thus distract them from their present peril. In following the game, I had gone more into the interior of the island, and a greater distance from the Rhône. Such was the impetuosity of the river, that three miles distant I yet heard its roaring. In the evening, when I returned to the farm, I found its occupants all huddled together in the kitchen, under the huge chimney-piece, suffering with a visible anxiety. On seeing me they uttered cries of joy.

"Sir," said the farmer's wife, "we trembled for fear you were lost in the island. The Rhône is very threatening to-night. May God protect us!" added she, making the sign of the cross.

I placed upon the table the bountiful products of my hunt, which for the first time, in the general consternation, were received neither by the thanks of the mother nor the joyous exclamations of the children. They served me my dinner with all possible

haste, and I went upstairs to my room, which overlooked the Rhône.

The angry river carried away trunks of trees, enormous wooden beams, the débris of bridges and boats, and passed under my window a whirlpool of foam. Night at length arrived. The sky here and there tore in twain its black curtain of clouds, as if to allow us to contemplate the scene of desolation. The wind had redoubled its violence, and the resistance it offered to the Rhône only seemed to exasperate the anger of the frightful torrent. In the darkness the great river groaned, sighed, and roared; there were by turns cries of rage, stifled sobs, sharp whistlings and ferocious shrieks, which froze the blood in my veins. At one time it could only be compared to a furious multitude, with all the accents of anger and threats, with all the exclamations of fright and despair; at other times, to a crowd of wagons, locomotives, and steam-engines, rolling, screaming, grinding, and dashing along with a frightful noise. Then to these appalling sounds suddenly succeeded a silence more mournful still, and I could hear nothing but the long moans and heart-rending wails of the south wind. My excited imagination saw the panting river carry away in its course fu-

neral barks, laden with dying freight, whose groans, I fancied, I could hear—phantom vessels loaded with souls borne onward toward the sea with a fantastic speed. Presently a dull, jerking, strange noise rose above the roaring of the winds and waves. At each of these shocks it seemed as if the house rocked on its very base, and fell heavily back on its sapped foundation. Without attempting to account for the sensation I experienced, this new accident alarmed me more than all the others. The night was too dark to distinguish anything. The noise besides seemed subterranean. At one time I shivered at the idea of an earthquake in the midst of this terrible convulsion of nature. The cold damp air I breathed at my window began to affect me; in bed it would have been impossible to close my eyes. I decided to go to the lower hall, where a confused murmur of voices and steps indicated that every one was up in the house.

The sight that met my eyes when I entered will never be effaced from my memory. The mother, her head veiled with her neckerchief—special sign of extreme terror with the peasant women of the south—was kneeling between her two children in tears, and earnestly praying in a low voice. The

farmer and his men were seated on a wooden bench, with their heads bowed in silence. In that damp and smoky hall, by the pale light of the little lamp fastened to the wall, I had, as it were, a vision of condemned culprits awaiting in their dungeons the death-summons.

"What is the matter?" I asked; "what new misfortune now?" . . . . A frightful explosion cut short my question. The children pressed, with piercing cries, against their frightened mother; the men fell upon their knees.

"The Rhône!" exclaimed a voice.

"Holy Mary! have mercy on us!" cried all those present, overcome with fright and despair, their heads bent to the ground.

A silence of death followed these words.

The danger was revealed to me. The terrible concussion, which a moment previous had shook the house, indicated the furious effort of the Rhône against the obstacle which opposed its overflowing. It had finally triumphed over its tenacious adversary; the dyke had broken!

To give you an idea of our anguish and distress would be impossible. The formidable explosion produced by the breaking of the dyke was follow-

ed by a prolonged roaring of the waves which, rushing into the gap, were surrounding the house. The torrent struck with repeated blows, like a battering ram pushed by an entire army, against our walls, which were on the point of falling. I had given up all for lost, so certain I was that the poor little habitation was unable to resist the gigantic assault of the flood-king. From the kitchen, which was at once deluged with water, we were obliged to take refuge on the second floor. A shipwrecked crew, clinging to the last fragments of their raft, could not have been more wretched than we. During an hour, which seemed a century, we fancied we felt at each moment the icy hand of death placed upon us. What a night! The first fury of the inundation appeared, however, slightly to abate; the noise had sensibly diminished in violence, the most pressing danger seemed for the moment to be suspended, and we waited for daylight with great anxiety.

The first gleam of morning finally came to show us the reality in all its horror. The Rhône had broken its dyke a few yards from the farm-house; one of the walls had even yielded to its first impetuosity. The river, rushing through the opening it

had made, had first dashed in all directions over the island. This was the moment its roaring had so much alarmed us. It had finally made a new bed at the place of the breach, and spread freely over the plain. From that moment the house was in no further danger than that of sinking on its foundation into the lake which had formed around it, and out of which rose up in the distance elms, cypresses, and poplars, like masts of innumerable vessels submerged in this general deluge.

We had escaped the peril of an immediate catastrophe, but other dangers still threatened us. Without speaking of the fear of seeing the house gradually undermined by the waters and burying us alive under its ruins, another death more hideous still stared us in the face. We should soon be without food. No doubt all who could would hasten in their boats to the relief of the sufferers, provide for their immediate wants, or take them in their vessels and land them in a safe place. However, to organize such an expedition would require time. The proximity of the breach and the impetuosity of the current rendered, besides, all attempts in our direction extremely dangerous. During the day we saw several boats pass by at a great distance. It was in

vain that from the roof of the house we hailed their crew with all the strength of our lungs. It was in vain we waved our handkerchiefs in sign of distress. They gave us to understand by their gestures that they were afraid of foundering by venturing too near the broken dyke, and that they would get stronger boats and better able to resist the violence of the current at this perilous spot. Night was fast approaching; we were threatened with having to pass another ten hours, ten mortal hours of darkness, in that state of helplessness, and our discouragement was turning to despair, when we espied in the horizon a little boat, which seemed to come with full speed towards us. It was with the greatest difficulty that it succeeded in coming near, and when it was within speaking distance, I heard distinctly some one call my name. I showed myself at the window, and the frail bark, struggling with redoubled energy against the contrary current, advanced, drew back, came up again, to be drawn away anew, always repulsed but never discouraged, and making its way little by little, finally came up and moored by a window on the second floor. It was rowed by two men, and pale at the same time with terror and joy, I recognized, through the darkness,

Mionette seated at the helm. I sprang toward her, and taking her hands:

"What!" I exclaimed, "is it you who have saved us? you! Mionette?"

"Was it not my duty?" she replied, her voice trembling with emotion.

"How did you learn I was at this farm?"

"Through my father. But that is of no consequence; let us be off; time presses." . . .

While we were exchanging these hurried words, the inhabitants of the farm, to the number of ten, had taken their places, men, women, and children, in the little boat. I seated myself by the side of Mionette, and very soon, carried away by the current, we rowed towards Saint-Gilles, not without great fear and anxiety of being capsized at any moment.

VII.

On landing, I found warm clothing, wine and coffee prepared especially for me, also a horse and wagon waiting to carry me to my farm. The provident Mionette had forgotten nothing. She seated herself beside me and we rode home.

"Did you well consider, imprudent and generous girl as you are," I said, when we had passed the first house in the village, "the rashness of your enterprise?"

"I had not the time to think," she coolly replied. "If you were to be saved, it was more important to act."

"But you should have thought of your father; in his extreme old age, how much he requires your care."

"Alas! what do my cares amount to," she replied, with a sweet and reproachful voice; "you certainly have not the right to speak of them, since you refuse them."

This artless devotion, which spoke for itself, touched the innermost chords of my soul. I felt my

heart gently beat under an impression which until then I had been an entire stranger to. My grateful admiration elevated to a heroine the humble peasant girl, and Mionette insinuated herself at the same time into my tenderness and respect. From the moment we arrived:

"Let us see; we must now attend to the dinner," said the young girl, whose gayety seemed to revive as soon as we entered the gate of the farm; and immediately setting herself to work, searching the closets, turning upside down everything in the buffet, and making herself perfectly at home, she prepared a frugal but excellent repast, which I invited her to share with me.

"No," she said, "the men sit at the table; the women must stand by to wait upon them."

It was impossible to make her sit down with me; she would not have infringed for the world upon that old custom of her country, where even the wife or the mother makes it her pride to become the servant of the son or husband.

After dinner, when she had put everything in order, she came, with all simplicity, to say good-by, as if nothing remarkable had passed during the day, and as if she had already forgotten the great service

she had rendered me at the risk of her life. Then she quietly left, and turned her steps homeward.

From that day she seldom came to the farm, but in the thousand little details of tender forethought, thousand little feminine delicacies, I recognized her hand, and I felt that she watched over me, even from a distance. In my lonely existence, I saw around me all those sweet attentions which might have been bestowed by a devoted sister. The sentiment which this timid and discreet affection inspired, called forth with renewed strength my disdain for my former life. In spite of me, my thoughts would constantly go back to that young girl, whose beauty, simple as her heart, had captivated me without coquetry, and whose spontaneous devotion was lavished upon me so unceasingly. Little by little I began to perceive that my reason and will lost all command over my heart. I saw plainly that it would be wiser, in the very interest of Mionette as well as for her happiness, that I should see her but seldom, and I resigned myself to this sacrifice, however painful it might henceforth prove to me.

An unforeseen circumstance, however, came to frustrate this fine resolution. Two or three months

later, in September, after a day's hunt in the marsh es, a violent headache compelled me to go to bed A sickness set in which gradually became worse, and very soon exhibited all the symptoms of inflammation of the lungs. The physician of Saint-Gilles, who had been hastily called in, guaranteed my recovery; but the disease had to take its course, and until the ninth day, the day of the crisis, I went through all its stages. Hardly had Mionette been informed of the circumstance, than she hastened over to see me. She insisted on passing every night by my bedside with her father, observing the progress of the disease, watching my slightest movements, indeed, every breath. If occasionally, with an enfeebled voice, I tried to express my gratitude, the darling child would place her finger on her pretty lips, and compel me to remain silent.

"Hush!" she said; "every word fatigues you, and a mere look is sufficient for me."

During the entire period of my convalescence, Mionette remained near me. The poor state of my health would have prevented the mind of the most foolish or wicked from entertaining the least improper thought. But when I considered myself in a fair way of recovery, the idea that her presence

might be wrongly interpreted commenced to torment me anew. The more tenderness and vigilance she manifested, the more I considered it my duty to become scrupulous for everything that concerned her honor.

She accompanied me every day in my little walks around the farm, which the doctor had recommended to bring up my strength. One day we went out about noon, and slowly directed our steps towards a little hill thickly covered with pine-trees in the neighborhood of my house. The sky was perfectly clear, the air was lukewarm, and impregnated with the penetrating odors of the Provençal heath. A sweet October sun warmed my enervated limbs, which revived under its rays with a feeling of renewed well-being. After an hour's walking, Mionette urged me to sit down and rest, which I did, and she seated herself near me:

"Well," she said smilingly, "I suppose in another week you will take your gun, and be off again on your old excursions." . . .

"Yes," I replied, with a grieved heart and a painful effort over myself, for I had all at once decided to embrace this opportunity to have a fair explanation with her; "yes, my strength will come back,

but my cure, alas! will not be a happiness for me, but only a new vexation.

"A vexation?" said the young girl with an artless movement of surprise, opening upon me her large, anxious eyes; "a vexation, holy virgin, and why?"

"Because my restoration to health will hasten our separation."

"Our separation!" . . . .

The words died upon her lips.

"Listen to me, Mionette," I replied, trying to give to my words a tone of decision and authority, in which I but poorly succeeded. "Your family for a long time have been attached to mine. I feel for your father a true friendship, and you yourself cannot doubt the affection you have inspired me with. In the absence of a more tender sentiment, does not your devotion impose upon me the duty of a gratitude equal to the peril which you have braved to save my life! This is the reason I cannot keep you near me. You are young, Mionette; you are beautiful. Think what might be the consequence of your remaining, although innocently, under my roof. If some injurious gossip should arise against us, how could we lay hold of it in its deep and perfidious course to put it down? Appearances would

bear witness against us, and if these wicked insinuations should take shape, would you not find it a difficult matter to get married afterward?" While listening to me, Mionette's face became sad, her lips slightly quivered, betraying the difficulty she experienced to conceal her emotion; her eyes glistened under her drooping lids, and then swam in tears.

"I do not wish to marry," she abruptly answered.

"Will you always think so?" I asked. "Any way, your marriage is not the only reason why I think a separation necessary. It is sufficient that your reputation is at stake!"

"It is necessary, then," she exclaimed, without being able any longer to restrain the tears which oppressed her, "that on my account, on account of my reputation, and my marriage—three miseries—you must be deprived of disinterested attentions, and a sincere affection?"

"Do not think of me."

"Ah!" she murmured, sobbing, "on the contrary, it is only you I do think of."

Notwithstanding the emotion which overpowered me, I tried to make her view the matter differently. But all my efforts were in vain.

"Really," she said, unable any longer to restrain

her pent-up grief, "I really believe you find pleasure in tormenting me. But, after all, what difference does it make to you whether I go or stay? Could you not allow yourself to be cared for and waited upon, without deigning to cast a look upon your servant. O! sir, do not take away from me my only joy in life."

"But, unfortunate child," I urged, while I also shared the contagious excitement of the moment, "can you not understand, that if I should act contrary to my reason, that you yourself would be lost."

"I fear nothing but to lose you."

"So, then, you will insist upon belonging to me?"

"Do I not belong to you already, and is not my life entirely devoted to you?"

I gazed long and steadily upon her; her frank expression did not change under my scrutinizing eye. In her face I read such volumes of love and innocence, entire forgetfulness of self, a devotion so blind, and such an absolute trust, that I could no longer resist the better instincts of my nature.

"What!" exclaimed I, "you give yourself up to me, noble and ingenuous heart, without any calculation, without even a thought for the future, pure and

simple girl; you will sacrifice for me your peace of mind, your existence, and only ask in exchange a little friendship; and I, weak-hearted, vulgar soul, I could hesitate. I, who have been betrayed by a grand lady, who fell in love with me and afterward refused to marry me; I, who have been duped by a poor fool, who, in order to reward me for snatching her from the lowest of miseries, even degradation, betrayed me for some miserable low comedian; . . . I would show myself in my turn vain, selfish, and ungrateful! No, the cowardice I have so often cursed in them shall never make me guilty toward you. Mionette, I honor and I love you; you will be neither my servant nor my mistress, confiding and artless child; before God and man, you shall be my wife!"

"Mionette, sir, is to-day Madame Vernier."

"I suspected it," was my reply.

"The preparations for the marriage," continued my host, "were short, and the ceremony took place as quietly as possible in the old and celebrated church of Saint-Gilles, in presence of only the necessary witnesses. My little farm-house I gradually found too small; so I bought and furnished—you know how—the one in which you have deigned to

accept my simple hospitality. Resolved to shun the world and to establish a perfect equality between my wife and myself, I have become a peasant, since I cannot make Mionette a lady; bonnets with plumes and dresses with flounces would spoil her in my eyes. As far as lies within my means, I am surrounded by every comfort. You know my life; you have seen me with my wife and child. They are the two poles of my horizon—the two terms of my existence. My heart, which was dead, they have called back to life. The time will soon arrive when the education of that dear little one will make for me the sweetest of recreations and the noblest of duties. God grant he may have a taste for farming like myself. It will not take long to make of him a happy, hardy, honest farmer. If the solitary life of the country should not please him, I will not oppose his preferences. He may choose for himself whether he will be a sailor, a soldier, an engineer, or even, if he wishes, a priest. But the deuce take me, if I ever make of him a lawyer, or a man of letters! I love him too much for that."

VIII.

I HAD listened without interruption to the monk of Franquevaux. His tone was so sincere, a feeling so unaffected gave such a warmth to his every word, that I would have ill requited his cordial hospitality if I had allowed myself to differ from him on a point where his very existence and most delicate sentiments were so deeply concerned. Although objections more or less serious, more or less trifling, offered themselves to my mind, yet I did not give utterance to them, and my host displayed through all that stormy, gloomy day, a most charming gayety. It appeared as if the recollection of the dangers he had escaped, and which might have proved so disastrous to his future tranquillity of mind and conscience, only made him better appreciate the calmness of his existence and the realization of his present happiness.

As it often happens in that climate, the next morning broke upon us with all the splendor of a southern sky, and most delightful weather succeeded the dreadful storm. Having taken leave of the

silent Madame Vernier, and bestowed a last caress on the little one who had lavished upon me an enthusiastic affection, I bade adieu to my host. I have never seen him since; but more than once the remembrance of him has stolen back to my mind. Often in the midst of a ball or some splendid scene at the theatre or opera, I find myself all of a sudden involuntarily musing on the solitary hunter of the Camargue, and the beautiful dona Mion, who, as I lend an indifferent ear to the accents of the speaker, or the strains of the music, are perhaps listening from their large canopied bed to the loud roaring of the wind and waves in the distance. Often, after a night of pleasure or study, as I turn lazily over, and court another of those indolent, unhealthy sleeps, the usual accompaniment of a Parisian morning, my thoughts will go back in spite of me to the monk of Franquevaux, who, at the same hour, opens his window to the rising sun, with an eager eye questions the horizon, and followed by his dogs, descends into the plain.

THE END.

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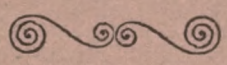

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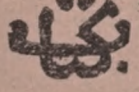

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